The Callam Legacy

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

BWA AND THE FUTURE
PAGE 2

ANNUAL GATHERING IN THAILAND
PAGE 3

ELIJAH BROWN — BWA GENERAL SECRETARY-ELECT
PAGE 4

TRIBUTE TO MINNIE JACKSON
PAGE 22

WHAT DOES THE REFORMATION HAVE TO DO WITH US BAPTISTS?
PAGE 23

OLDEST BAPTIST CHURCH IN AFRICA CELEBRATES 225TH ANNIVERSARY
PAGE 27
GIFTS FROM GLOBAL BAPTISTS:
STORIES ENGAGING CHURCHES IN CONVERSATION

A podcast from the Division on Mission, Evangelism and Justice (MEJ) of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) hosted by MEJ Coordinator Trisha Miller Manarin

This monthly podcast focuses on the work and ministry of member bodies and churches in the BWA. Our goal is to share stories from our Baptist brothers and sisters around the world, encouraging our churches to consider and explore new ministry possibilities.
CONTENTS

2 BWA AND THE FUTURE

3 BWA IN ACTION
  4 Annual Gathering in Thailand
  4 Elijah Brown — BWA General Secretary-Elect
  5 Callam Welcomes Elijah Brown’s Appointment

5 Paul Msiza on Elijah Brown
6 Human Rights Award
6 BWA Revives Mini-Library Program

7 CALLAM TRIBUTE
  7 Callam Lauded for Service to Baptists
  8 A Personal Word from Paul Msiza
  9 Tribute from the Governor-General
  10 God’s Authentic Gardener of BWA
  11 Neville Tributes
  17 Callam Offers Thanks
  18 Ministry in a Changing Society
  19 Overcoming Challenges
  20 A Theology of Unity

24 Reformational Preaching
25 Baptists in Latin America Mark the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

26 HAPPENINGS AROUND THE WORLD
  26 Latin Americans Host Regional Congress
  27 Oldest Baptist Church in Africa
  28 Baptist Elected Head of World’s Largest United Church
  28 Sierra Leone Floods
  29 Liberia’s 170th Independence
  31 Callam Visits Sri Lanka
  32 The Christian Community in Thailand
  32 Heavy Flooding in Nepal
  33 Newest BWA Member Body Conference
  34 BWA Responds to Weather Disasters
  35 Hurricane Harvey
  35 Youth Festival in Trinidad

22 STAFF TRIBUTE TO MINNIE JACKSON
  22 Last Word: Looking Back, Going Forward

23 REFORMATION
  23 What Does the Reformation Have to Do with Us Baptists?

24 Staff Tribute to Minnie Jackson

26 Happenings Around the World

27 Oldest Baptist Church in Africa

28 Baptist Elected Head of World’s Largest United Church

28 Sierra Leone Floods

29 Liberia’s 170th Independence

31 Callam Visits Sri Lanka

32 The Christian Community in Thailand

32 Heavy Flooding in Nepal

33 Newest BWA Member Body Conference

34 BWA Responds to Weather Disasters

35 Hurricane Harvey

35 Youth Festival in Trinidad

36 MEMORIAM

37 EDITORIAL
BWA AND THE FUTURE

Over the last 10 years, I have had opportunity to address a range of issues in BWA publications. The aim of the 41 editorials that have appeared in this Baptist World and the 114 editorials in BWA Connect, together with 10 years of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost messages and other general greetings, has been to glorify God and edify readers as we journey together on Christian pilgrimage.

In this final editorial, I wish to underscore a central concern that has echoed through these pages over the years. Any organization that seeks to serve a worldwide movement to the glory of God needs to develop a clear self-consciousness that is anchored to the basis of its existence and also foundational for the mission it espouses.

BWA should not be understood as merely a group of like-minded people sharing a common heritage called Baptist. Nor should it simply be a space for networking by various autonomous entities that see real advantages to be derived from associating in this global Baptist organization. The basic reason for this is that BWA is an ecclesial body. It is more than a voluntary aggregation of independent church groups. As the framers of the original BWA constitution put it, BWA was formed to give expression to “the essential oneness in the Lord Christ Jesus, as their God and Saviour, of the Churches of the Baptist order and faith throughout the world.” Even if the wording of this important statement from the original BWA Constitution has been altered, the original vision of BWA’s purpose has not changed.

Secularizing trends and tendencies may suggest that this lofty goal is reducible to the trite notion of BWA as a body that networks the Baptist world for Christ. In the perspective of certain assumptions of post-modernism, the institutional dimensions of the Baptist movement’s life can properly be pushed to one side to allow networking to flourish. Yet, hardly is this an appropriate perspective for those who assert the supernatural dimensions of the church’s existence.

That we are part of the “people of God,” “the body of Christ” and the temple of the Holy Spirit is not an identity from which we can safely separate ourselves. If we do, we will not remain an authentic community that is faithful to the one who called the church into being and provides for the church’s ongoing vitality.

I wish to encourage Baptists around the world to recognize their common bonds in Christ and the common heritage that draws them together. If we are able to discern in all who are united in BWA the hospitable spirit that welcomes other Baptists not yet participating in the fellowship, a common vision of the place of the church in God’s plan for the salvation of the world and a common sharing in the ministry of Christ through the church, what a glorious future awaits us.

Baptists are also urged to recognize their common participation in a global family of Christ’s faithful people that extends beyond our own narrow denominational borders. We are a people in communion with God and in communion with other Christians to God’s glory.

In this perspective, we are ready to abandon a hostile autonomy and an unjustifiable independence. We gladly adopt a communitarianism that does not reject individuality, but restores it to the arms of the sacred community in which its interests are brought into dialogue with the common good and its God is the God of all.

Ours will be a great future if we remain constantly ready to listen and respond affirmatively to the guidance the Holy Spirit provides. The future holds in store creative ideas that we will share with each other as we go forward on God’s mission. It will be marked by a joyful spirit of mutual accountability that has no room for paternalism, imperialism or self-righteousness. God works mightily through ecclesial movements that are formed for service in the name of the triune God and dedicated wholeheartedly to the glory of God.

Five hundred years after the Reformation, we have learned that the Holy Spirit does accomplish the work of renewing the living organism called the church, making it a vibrant body that is truly responsive to its given vocation. We have also learned that our ways of applying the lessons we learn and the wisdom we gain can actually end up harming the very cause to which we have dedicated our lives. That is why we pray perpetually, “Come Holy Spirit, we need you.” And we pray and work for the day when all God’s people shall discover the unity that God has given us and, through the prism of that unity, discern our mission in the world in which we still affirm “one Lord, one faith and one baptism.”

“Ours will be a great future if we remain constantly ready to listen and respond affirmatively to the guidance the Holy Spirit provides. The future holds in store creative ideas that we will share with each other as we go forward on God’s mission. It will be marked by a joyful spirit of mutual accountability that has no room for paternalism, imperialism or self-righteousness.”

— Neville Callam
ANNUAL GATHERING IN THAILAND

Approximately 300 Baptist leaders, pastors, theologians, seminary presidents, professors and interested Baptists from some 40 countries met in Bangkok, Thailand, for worship, fellowship, study and decision meetings.

The 2017 Annual Gathering of the Baptist World Alliance, held July 2-7, included meetings of the General Council and the Executive Committee, the two governing bodies of the BWA, as well as meetings of standing and advisory committees.

Commissions received papers and presentations on topics of interest to Baptists. Among the topics were Spiritual and Moral Formation of Christians, Contextualization of Theological Education and Constructing a Spirituality for the Dislocated, among others.

Justice issues related to human rights, religious freedom, social oppression, poverty, gender, the environment and other areas of concern were explored, such as How to Create Environmental Awareness Among Churches, Reframing our Relationship to Creation and Understanding the Global Issue of Modern Slavery.

Anthony R. Cross, adjunct supervisor at The International Baptist Theological Study Centre in Amsterdam, Netherlands, was the presenter at a special forum on baptism. He delivered two lectures entitled “Baptism – Who Cares? Baptists and Baptism in Recent Thought” and “Saved through Baptism: A Sacramental Baptist View.” The papers examined recent developments in Baptist understanding and practice of baptism, vis-à-vis the biblical mandate.

A seminar on crisis management explored how to conduct a threat assessment and the basic principles to be applied in the event of a crisis. Participants were guided on the understanding of a crisis, the stages of a crisis and the dos and don’ts of crisis communication.

A highlight of the week was the election of American Elijah Brown as general secretary-elect for the BWA. Brown is BWA regional secretary for North America and general secretary of the North American Baptist Fellowship. A specialist in human rights and religious liberty, he is executive vice president of the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative, a Christian human rights organization in the United States. Prior to that, he was associate professor of Religion at East Texas Baptist University, where he was founding director of the Freedom Center. He will succeed Neville Callam who retires in December 2017 after more than 10 years of service in that position.

A dinner was held in Callam’s honor on Thursday, July 6. In honor of the retiring BWA leader, the Callam Unity Fund has been established to strengthen the bonds of oneness and unity among Baptists and beyond. Callam’s newest book, From Fragmentation to Wholeness: Race, Ethnicity, and Communion, published by Judson Press, was made available during the Annual Gathering.

Minnie Jackson, the longest serving staff member of the BWA, was honored for her 34 years of service. Jackson, who retired at the end of July, had worked in the secretarial pool, in the Youth Department and, for the last seven years, in the office of the general secretary. Bonny Resu, BWA regional secretary for Asia and general secretary for the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation, was lauded for his 20 years in that position. Resu retired at the end of September.

The 2017 Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award was presented to medical doctor Cynthia Maung who has devoted nearly 30 years to providing healthcare to refugees from Myanmar living on the country’s border with Thailand. Maung was among the displaced Karen who fled Myanmar and settled in Mae Sot on the border between the two countries.

Three organizations were received into membership, bringing two new countries into the BWA fold. The Baptist Evangelical Church of Chad became the first BWA member organization in the Central African nation. Formed in 2005, it comprises 200 members in five churches. The Turkish Baptist Alliance was established in 2014 and has five churches with 220 members. It is the first BWA member group from Turkey. Formed in 2014, the Zomi Baptist Churches of America is an association of 2,500 members in 33 churches in the United States. There are now 20 member organizations in the US. Membership in the BWA now stands at 238 organizations in 124 countries and territories.

The 2018 Annual Gathering will be held July 1-7 in Zurich, Switzerland. More information can be found on the BWA website at www.bwanet.org.

To donate to the Callam Unity Fund, go to https://www.bwanet.org/online-giving or send to Callam Unity Fund Baptist World Alliance 405 North Washington Street Falls Church, VA 22046 USA
The general secretary is the CEO of the BWA and has overall responsibilities for the administration and operations of the organization, and is its chief representative to global organizations and institutions, ecclesial and secular, and to governments.

Brown, 36, has had more than a decade long involvement in the international umbrella organization for Baptists, starting in 2005. In 2007 he was named one of 35 global emerging leaders by the BWA. He is currently BWA regional secretary for North America and general secretary for the North American Baptist Fellowship.

He is a member of the BWA General Council; the Constitution and Bylaws Committee; the Nominations Committee; the Congress Committee; and the Mission, Evangelism and Justice Advisory Committee. He is vice chair of the BWA Commission on Religious Liberty and is a member of the Commission on Theological Education.

Brown, executive vice president of the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative, a Christian human rights organization based in Virginia, in the United States, was previously associate professor of Religion at East Texas Baptist University where he was founding director of the Freedom Center.

The son of a pastor, Brown was ordained to the Christian ministry in July 2002 and was associate pastor at Taylor’s Valley Baptist Church in Temple, Texas. He said his “lifelong commitment to ministry [is] shaped by three principles.” These are: “absolute dedication to the study of the Bible and life-alignment to the teachings of Scripture, a firm belief that the Holy Spirit is always at work in the world and that our responsibility is to listen to how we can lovingly join in his activity and in the beauty of the local church as an agent for transformation and reconciliation as the bride of Christ.”

Brown declared: “I understand my own calling to be one of global, collaborative engagement that believes in the local church, takes seriously the word of God, listens to the Holy Spirit and seeks to build networks that act together in areas of mission, justice and deepening theological education as Christ-centered witnesses within the public square, especially in areas of conflict, persecution, refugee marginalization and injustice.”

John Upton, former BWA president and chair of the General Secretary Search Committee, said, “Elijah understands the BWA, values human rights, is a champion of religious freedom, connects with all generations, is a passionate speaker, a skilled administrator.”

Upton noted that the new BWA leader “is well published and deeply respected in academic circles. Elijah combines motivation, inspiration and innovation with great skill and effectiveness.”

Brown earned a Bachelor’s degree from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Texas with a double major in religion and history, and a Ph.D. in Divinity with a focus on World Christianity from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

Brown’s specialties lie in human rights and religious liberty. His dissertation focused on issues related to world Christianity, including mission and church growth, peace-building and conflict resolution and the interaction of religion and politics. He helped to launch the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative and became its executive vice president.

He has conducted research on, led training events in and done human rights advocacy work in South Sudan, Nigeria, Eritrea, Iraq, Taiwan and other countries. He has submitted reports to the United Nations and the US Department of State, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom and several foundations and groups.

Brown is married to Amy and is father to Hudson, Sahara and Keziah.

“...I understand my own calling to be one of global, collaborative engagement that believes in the local church, takes seriously the word of God, listens to the Holy Spirit and seeks to build networks that act together in areas of mission, justice and deepening theological education as Christ-centered witnesses within the public square, especially in areas of conflict, persecution, refugee marginalization and injustice.”

— ELIJAH BROWN
CALLAM WELCOMES ELIJAH BROWN’S APPOINTMENT

CURRENT BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE GENERAL SECRETARY NEVILLE CALLAM has welcomed the election of Elijah Brown as his successor.

“Elijah is the product of a home with deep roots in the Texas Baptist family,” Callam noted. “His parents named him Elijah Matthew as a sign of their own passionate Judeo-Christian commitment.”

Callam indicated that Brown is thoroughly suited for his new role, pointing to his scholastic preparation. “His early formation in Texas is supplemented by years of study in the United Kingdom and research experience in Kenya, Uganda and Sudan.”

Brown’s longstanding involvement in BWA life, covering more than a decade, gives him deep insight into the international organization. “His years of association with BWA, which began with his appointment to the first group of young people forming the Emerging Leaders’ Network, have contributed to widening the horizons of his mind and equipping him for service within a multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic milieu.”

Callam said the newly elected leader “has been gifted by God,” and has “a passion for social justice, including religious liberty, which influenced him to serve in the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative, a religious liberty advocacy agency, where he gained managerial experience.”

In expressing full confidence in his successor, Callam declared that he “expects Elijah’s service with the BWA to be marked by robust advocacy in the cause of social justice and enthusiastic engagement witnessing to the transformative power of the Gospel.”

Brown will be the fourth American to serve as BWA general secretary. Previous Americans were Walter Lewis from Missouri (1939-1948), Robert Denny from Kentucky (1969-1980) and Denton Lotz from New York (1988-2007).

PAUL MSIZA REACTS TO ELIJAH BROWN’S ELECTION AS WORLD BAPTIST LEADER

The following is a statement by Baptist World Alliance President Paul Msiza on the election of Elijah Brown as general secretary-elect

We thank God for the leadership of Dr. Neville Callam, for the 10 years he led us so well. Now we receive with thanksgiving the new general secretary-elect, Elijah Brown.

God has moved in a miraculous way to call and to select a young man, full of energy, very excited. A Christian committed to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose faith stands upon the Lord and the Savior of the church.

It is a joy to receive Elijah as he prepares to serve the BWA come the beginning of next year, 2018. I’m looking forward as president to working with him. I’m looking forward to it with excitement, to see how the Lord will lead us as we begin this new journey with Elijah.

I’m confident God will use him just as God has used Neville — use him to grow the BWA, to continue to expand the mission of God through the BWA.

The BWA is behind him and will support him. He was received with great excitement, a sign that this is God’s hand upon him. We trust that the Lord will keep him and give him good health to take care of the work that is set before him.

Especially, I’m looking forward to seeing how his ministry as a young person will impact the young people, the young adults, to see them getting involved in the whole life of the BWA.

We bless the Lord for this choice and we pray that God will continue to bless us as the Baptist World Alliance.
REFUGEE DOCTOR RECEIVES HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

CYNTHIA MAUNG, A MEDICAL DOCTOR WHO HAS SPENT NEARLY 30 YEARS TREATING REFUGEES who fled “oppression and repression in Myanmar,” was presented with the 2017 Baptist World Alliance Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award during the global organization’s Annual Gathering in Bangkok, Thailand, in early July.

Maung was hailed as a “woman of faith” who “draws heavily on her Baptist heritage,” committing herself “selflessly to the welfare of the poor and oppressed.”

Originally from the town of Moulmein in Myanmar (Burma), Maung fled her homeland along with thousands of other Karen refugees. In 1989 she, along with six volunteers, established the Mae Tao Medical Clinic in a dilapidated building in Mae Sot, which lies on the border of Myanmar and Thailand.

The clinic, which has since moved to a more secure location, has grown to more than 600 staff treating up to 150,000 patients per year, including locals, migrant workers and refugees.

Maung and her staff helped to bring a malaria epidemic under control and treat outbreaks of pneumonia and other diseases. They tend to trauma victims of gunshots and land mines and offer maternity care and HIV counseling.

In addition to its medical services, it also trains medical interns, nurses and hygienists, as well as addressing issues of domestic violence and human rights, and feeds more than 500 people twice each day.

Maung garnered a global network of more than 50 financial and other supporters for her clinic, such as churches, NGOs, international organizations, educational institutions and individual donors.

She had previously received the Jonathan Mann Award, sponsored by Swiss and US health organizations, in 1999; Southeast Asia’s Ramon Magsaysay Award for community leadership in 2002; the Sydney Peace Prize in 2013; and the South Korean POSCO TJ Park Prize in 2015. She was named one of Time magazine’s Asian Heroes in 2003.

Maung actively participates in the Kawthloolei Karen Baptist Churches and Asia Pacific Baptist Federation women’s work.

BWA REVIVES MINI-LIBRARY PROGRAM

During the 2017 Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering in Bangkok, Thailand, four mini-libraries were donated to be distributed in Asia.

The Mini-Libraries program, an initiative of the BWA Division on Mission, Evangelism and Justice, began in the 1980s as part of the Baptist Fund for World Evangelization and Discipleship (BFWED).

The mini-libraries were put on hold for a number of years due to the high cost of shipping. Revived this year with the hopes of developing a deeper connection with Baptists around world, several BWA commission members and friends wrote notes of encouragement that were included in each book. There was a renewed interest in financial contributions to this worthwhile ministry.

A.K. Lama, chair of the BWA Commission on Ministry, will deliver the books personally to each recipient. They will be used by students, instructors, professors, clergy and laity in various settings, including areas predominantly inhabited by adherents of other religious traditions such as Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims.

These resources were carefully considered through consultation with a theological librarian who serves theological institutions around the world, particularly in the Two Thirds World, as well as local leaders and the BWA office.

Books include Bible commentary, dictionary and theological reflection in addition to publications from the BWA.
CALLAM LAUDED FOR SERVICE TO BAPTISTS

APLETHORA OF TRIBUTES WERE OFFERED to Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam during the BWA Annual Gathering, held July 2-7 in Bangkok, Thailand. The Jamaican, the first Black person and the first who is neither an American nor a European to lead the BWA, retires in December after more than 10 years of service in the position.

At a dinner held in his honor, Callam, who is from the small town of Gibraltar in Jamaica’s interior, was hailed as being “morally, ethically and spiritually strong as the fabled Rock of Gibraltar.” He was described as a “saint, friend, leader, colleague” who is “moral, compassionate, inclusive.”

The Baptist leader was commended for shepherding the global organization safely through the Great Recession, a period of global financial hardships and economic decline that emerged in 2008 and continued for several years.

Despite periods of economic uncertainty, the BWA under Callam’s leadership raised more than US$26 million, including almost US$12 million to Baptist World Aid, more than US$8 million from churches, institutions and individuals and more than US$5 million to the General Fund. He implemented a comprehensive Donor Recognition Program and the 400 Legacy Gift program.

At the same time, the BWA undertook bold initiatives. A new Division on Freedom and Justice was launched after years of discussion and debate. The division was later merged with another division to form the Division on Mission, Evangelism and Justice. Several commissions were formed, including those on Interfaith Relations, Racial and Gender Justice, Social and Economic Justice, Peace and Reconciliation, Religious Liberty, Human Rights Advocacy and Creation Care.

In emphasizing the importance of evangelism, Callam secured funding, capitalized at US$250,000, for an evangelism award to be given out every five years.

Administratively, the Jamaican spent much of his decade of service streamlining the administration and operational organs of the BWA. He facilitated the revision of the Fiscal Policy Manual and the Human Resources Manual, established the BWA recording studio, redesigned the website, incorporated a conference registration system and updated the IT infrastructure.

The gathering was told that “the unity of the church and of all Christians” is particularly close to Callam’s heart. He has spent much time and effort nurturing “the cultivation of a corporate worship life and practice among Baptists.” In fulfillment of these dreams, he led a collaborative effort that resulted in the publication of the Covenant on Intra-Baptist Relationships. That document, available in 25 languages on the BWA website, has been viewed or downloaded more than 60,000 times.

BWA membership grew over the past 10 years, with 24 new member organizations, now numbering 238. New countries and territories such as South Sudan, Chad, Grenada, Turks and Caicos Islands and Vietnam were added to the BWA fold.

Described as an “intellectual giant of the faith but a humble servant,” he was lauded for being “resolute in his convictions of the efficacy of the life in Christ” and for being a “man of faith who lives, perceives, thinks and decides theologically.”

Callam came to the general secretary’s office after serving as a BWA vice president. He had wide ecclesial experience, having held every major position in the Jamaica Baptist Union, including serving twice as president, acting as general secretary and being elected treasurer.

Described as an “intellectual giant of the faith but a humble servant,” he was lauded for being “resolute in his convictions of the efficacy of the life in Christ” and for being a “man of faith who lives, perceives, thinks and decides theologically.”
CALLAM LAUNDER FOR SERVICE TO BAPTIST
CONTINUED

He was a leader in Jamaica’s religious community, primarily through the Jamaica Council of Churches, and was a pioneer in religious and public broadcasting on the island. He was founding chair and general manager of TBC FM, The Breath of Change; founding board member of the National Religious Media Commission, operators of Love FM; and founding chair of the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica.

Regionally and globally Callam actively participated in the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, where he was a vice president; and the World Council of Churches, where he was a longstanding member of the influential Commission on Faith and Order, chairing several of that commission’s committees.

Representatives from each of the six regions of the BWA spoke in Callam’s honor at the dinner in Bangkok, including BWA Vice Presidents Michael Okwakol of Uganda, Dimitrina Oprenova of Bulgaria and Naomi Tyler-Lloyd of the United States.

Others who spoke were Tomás Mackey from Argentina, Devon Dick from Jamaica and Frank Rees of Australia. Ashley Becker spoke on the behalf of the BWA staff.

Video tributes were received from BWA General Secretary Emeritus Denton Lotz and Ganoune Diop of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions, among others. All video tributes, including those to be included in a second celebration planned for October in Virginia in the United States, will be available on the website.

A PERSONAL WORD
PAUL MSIZA, SOUTH AFRICA, BWA PRESIDENT

It has been great to serve with you and to see how you’ve managed to bring the BWA family together from diverse cultures and traditions, ensuring BWA becomes a family to all, a network that embraces Baptists from all walks of life.

Your commitment to the unity of the church has been a hallmark of your leadership – to steer the BWA toward becoming the church of our Lord Jesus Christ that embraces all Christians. That goes beyond even the Baptist family.

My wish and prayer is that the Lord will continue to use you in your next phase of service; that your ministry will continue to touch many.

The BWA still needs you, needs your input. We need great theologians like you; great pastors and great leaders who will continue to impact lives through the Baptist world family.

Thank you for being such a great friend and for the moments and the laughter we shared together; moments when we had very serious debates and reflections on the work of the BWA. You did all those things without any other intention than to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless you, brother, and your family. We pray that God will continue to keep you and give you good health.
Jamaica is exceedingly proud of the extraordinary achievements of one of its very distinguished sons, the Reverend Dr. Neville Callam.

His ten-year leadership of the Baptist World Alliance resulted in significant advances in many areas of the work of the organization, both internally and in its capacity for evangelism, advocacy and social impact.

Dr. Callam’s success at the international level is evidence of the dedication and insight which he has displayed throughout his life in Jamaica. His grounding in a Christian family, his example as a student leader, and his passion for learning equipped him well for service in Ministry.

He also identified and acted upon the need for meaningful public communication as a vehicle for spreading the Gospel, raising the level of public consciousness and ultimately enriching the lives of his fellow citizens. His clarity of thought, generosity of spirit, sensitivity to local conditions and his ability to work with diverse interest groups contributed significantly to the excellent reputation he enjoyed in Jamaica.

Our country joins with the Baptist World Alliance and the wider international church and civic communities in expressing gratitude to God for the blessing which Reverend Dr. Callam has been to us all, and for the inspiration of his example to the generations which follow him.

We wish for him and his family all that is good and satisfying as he officially moves into retirement. We nevertheless look forward to his continuing contribution to the advancement of those causes to which his entire life has been dedicated.

May God bless him and family richly and by extension the Baptist World Alliance.
God’s Authentic Gardener of BWA

(JOSHUA 14:12)

The enchanting Jamaican sun did drift –
South. Its Caribbean rays stopped in cold Virginia,
The first permanent English settlement in 1607
Of America to the North, and did history again make
In 2007. Was there some mistake?
“The earth is the Lord’s.”

Oh, no! The Master’s wise plan was long set in place -
To send a new kind of gardener, a Son-soaked one, God
Did need. A well-flavored, one-of-a-kind, strong, stalwart, exuberant -
To root out pedantic weeds and bring new life to God’s garden
And follow the Master’s plan, carefully as the specially-chosen warden.
“My will be done.”

The worldwide Alliance of Baptists cherished rich soil, widely dispersed
In 122 lands. Well poised for intra-Baptist Kingdom relations.
Precious seeds, each in unique and deep soil, and each needed by the whole
To work in unity and love, regardless of their varying climes.
The Master made all, honorable, beautiful, needed to fulfill the purpose of times.
“Behold, what manner of love!”

The old sun did set and the new did arise, giving brilliant new rays
To enhance the bright Baptist skies. Such splendor to nurture, such beauty to display
This new gardener was well equipped to make fruitful furrows in a new way.
To stimulate the soil, and bring together to grow
New expressions of oneness, unity, love and God’s glory to show.
“Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

With theological soundness and an inspired spirit made strong,
Majestically nurtured with faithful, selfless spouse on Jamaica’s proud ground. This gardener
Did multiply the Alliance’s seeds from 214 with untiring work and timeless bold zeal,
Falls Church’s ferocious strength of sun no match for this Caribbean one grown,
This gardener was well prepared for all kinds of heat: acclimatized, weather blown.
“All scripture is given by inspiration.”

With weather most foul, he chose to obey, to plant God’s new garden,
No matter the cost. Weeds must be uprooted; new growth never obscured.
From Ghana to Bangkok, no other leader to follow but his God.
A newly-planted garden, of which his Master is proud. “Well done,
Good and faithful servant,” the Master did say. “Your crown in Christ you have won.”
“Oh, the depth of the riches of both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”

–LEO THORNE
NEVILLE TRIBUTES

ELIJAH BROWN, BWA GENERAL SECRETARY-ELECT

Ten years of faithful service! Dr. Callam, on behalf of the North American Baptist Fellowship, thank you for visiting across our region on multiple occasions, for leading congress as well as an Annual Gathering in our region. Thank you for reaching out and extending a warm hand of friendship in relationship building to many Baptists across North America, for leading all of us to greater dialogue and better relationship with one another and the worldwide Christian community. Thank you for countless flights and sleepless nights, for all the hard work you have done, for the guidelines you so clearly articulate in the Intra-Baptist Relationship, a document that will help us dialogue and stand with greater unity with one another and be a legacy that shapes all of us in the BWA family for many years to come. We have been deeply enriched by your service. You have called us into greater relationship with one another and most importantly, with Jesus Christ, and to seek together to advance the kingdom of God.

KAREN FRANCIS, JAMAICA

Rev. Neville Callam has exemplified the highest levels of commitment, resilience and confidence and what it means to be a true servant of God in ways that are deserving of the highest honor. My growth as a pastor is largely due to the Rev. Callam. The early years of his involvement in my life have stuck with me. Even after almost 15 years as a pastor I can still hear the melody of his words ringing in my ear, “Karen, just be faithful.” Rev. Callam, the 10 years of service you have given to the BWA are worthy of recognition and honor. My husband, Raymond; son, Dominic, and I, salute you. I am forever grateful and will always be proud of you. May God’s grace and peace be yours in abundance.

KEN BULLOCK, USA

Our wise and elder brother, Neville, you have invested your prodigious leadership in us; you have enlarged the table around which all of us global Baptists have gathered. We respect you and honor you and are grateful for the way you thoughtfully and carefully included as many voices as possible in our deliberations and work. How we love you. It gives us great pleasure to publicly acknowledge your fine work on our behalf, and although it is bitter-sweet to see you step away, we pray your every success as you begin your next chapter. We hope you know you’re beloved in the Lord. May the Lord bless you and keep you.

DOREEN MORRISON, UK

My enduring memory of Dr. Callam is a leader who, one day, took time out of his very busy schedule to sit with me, show respect for my work and validated me as a person. Because of that meeting, I went on to publish Slavery’s Heroes, stories of the first Baptist missionaries to the world. Sir, I thank God for you and will forever remember you with much joy.

NATHAN NETTLETON, AUSTRALIA

Rev. Neville Callam recognizes the need for Baptist worship to be driven more by the gospel of our crucified and risen Lord. He has promoted and supported those who could help us find our way as worshiping disciples of Jesus. I am enormously grateful. The global Baptist family has been truly blessed by the gift of this man’s wise, gracious and courageous leadership.

DAVID GOATLEY, USA

The Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention joins Baptists around the world to bring congratulations to General Secretary Neville Callam as he brings to a close his tenure of leadership with us. Among your many contributions to the Baptist world, I’m particularly grateful for your emphasis on Baptist unity. Not strategically, but theologically. Because we belong to God we belong to each other. Thank you for reminding us of our commitment to work together. Congratulations and blessings on your next journey in life.

ELAINE SMITH, USA

It is my distinct privilege to pay tribute to Neville Callam as he transitions from his position as general secretary of BWA. Neville came to the BWA with a plethora of qualifications and experiences in theology, administration, business, communications, education and as a pastor. Neville embraced the many organizations that are part of BWA and the BWA staff. He dealt with everyone with equity and honesty. Neville, you are a man who has many gifts and talents. I’m so happy you were able to share those with BWA during your tenure. I wish you, Dulcie and all your family a fruitful and joyous future. God bless you.

DEVON DICK, JAMAICA

Neville Callam is meticulous, talented and a master administrator and theologian. He is a Christian who loves the Lord, loves God’s people and loves God’s ministry. In 2007 I was privileged to be at the historic induction of Neville and now I’m honored to be part of the team celebrating his 10 years of faithful ministry. The Jamaica Baptist Union is proud to say Neville is a son in whom we are well pleased.

DON SEWELL, USA

I think of Neville Callam as a Christian gentleman who is eloquent, committed, passionate, courageous and a blessing. He’s eloquent at all times, very much an erudite. He’s committed, certainly for the single purpose of the best interests of Christ’s kingdom and of Baptists in our world. He’s compassionate. He understands the human condition very well, those of lowly estate and those at the top of society. He’s also courageous because he deals with issues that others would shy away from. Neville Callam has been a blessing in his 10 years of solid service in leadership to the BWA.

OTNEIL BUNACIU, ROMANIA

Greetings from Romanian Baptists and Baptists from Central and Eastern Europe. We appreciate your work as general secretary and your fight for the Baptist cause to defend those who want religious freedom. We pray God will bless you and use you for the expansion of his kingdom.

MICHAEL OKWAKOL, UGANDA

I congratulate Dr. Callam upon the completion of his time as general secretary of the BWA. We appreciate your firmness, strength and decisiveness as you steered the organization at a time when things were not very good, transitioning economically and many other factors that affected everybody in the world. I appreciate you for supporting me and helping us to sort out relationships in the Baptist Convention of Kenya. Your presence in that meeting helped set the direction and the reconciliation that took place. You have been a good representative of Baptists around the world. Your theological stance, that we stay focused on the theological position of the organization, is a big encouragement. As an African, I want to say you represented us well, being the first the first Black general secretary of
the BWA. We are proud. We pray that as you go into your retirement, God will use you in various ways.

HARRY LUCENAY, USA AND HONG KONG
Thank you Neville Callam for your leadership of the BWA. Thank you for inviting Kowloon International Baptist Church to challenge the BWA in evangelism. We look forward to seeing innovating concepts drawn from different parts of the world as well as the Family from individualistic cultures and collective cultures, from fear and power world views, our shame and honor world views, our guilt and innocence world views, begin to probe ways to reach their people with the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. Thank you for opening these avenues of expression to Baptists.

KARL JOHNSON, JAMAICA
It gives me great joy to bring greetings to Neville who has served the worldwide Baptist family with distinction for these 10 years. Neville is a tremendous servant of God who has brought to his life’s work and ministry a variety of gifts. Neville is a good steward who has honed the gifts God has blessed him with. He has become a wonderful example for many of us. Thanks to you and Dulcie and we’ll certainly keep you in our prayers.

REGINA CLAAS, GERMANY AND SOUTHERN AFRICA
Dr. Callam is dedicated, first of all to the Lord Jesus Christ, and secondly, to the people of God around the world. He has served the BWA with great dedication. He is a man of determination, to bring the best out of people and to do the best for the BWA. He is a man of zeal who has done this job with energy and tirelessness. He worked very, very long working hours and always tried to bring the best of his abilities to the job. I’m very grateful for him, but also for his wife, Dulcie. Without her at his side he would not be able to do what he did. Thank you both for your service to the BWA. May the Lord bless you richly for what you have done to bless other people.

DAVID KERRIGAN, UNITED KINGDOM
Neville, on behalf of the BMS World Mission family, I thank you for your leadership of the BWA over the last 10 years. If I had to pick out one highlight, it would be that evening in Birmingham when you delivered the Sam Sharpe Lecture and spoke with such clarity and conviction that many people still recall that time. Thank you for your leadership. Every blessing in your retirement.

JEREMY BELL, CANADA
Neville, I’ve had the wonderful experience to be exposed to the wisdom, scholarship and the clarity of theology and reflection that has been part of your life amongst us. I’d like to honor Dr. Callam for his years of service, his sense of the whole world and the whole gospel and the ability to imagine what it is to be in the kingdom of God in the BWA in its many forms. I’m thankful for the Baptist-Muslim dialogue, the continuing dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, the understanding and working with those in the evangelical fellowship and the World Council of Churches. Thank you. May the Lord continue to bless you and give you his peace. As Nehemiah said, “May the joy of the Lord be your strength this day and even for ever more.”

CHRIS ELLIS, UK
It’s really good to have this opportunity to send this greeting to Neville on his forthcoming retirement. I was delighted when he was called and appointed as general secretary both as a Jamaican Baptist and a committed ecumenist. I was delighted that he was going to be in that role. I thank you Neville for your years of service. I wish you well in retirement. There’s no such thing as retirement, but there’s discipleship. God be with you.

ANGELO SCHEEPERS, SOUTH AFRICA
Thanks to Neville for his input in my life, the All Africa Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. He presented one of the best papers our union ever heard on Baptist principles at our 2015 Annual Assembly. It was great working with Neville, especially as secretary of the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2015 Baptist World Congress in Durban. Neville, may you and Dulcie have a great and fulfilling retirement. Thank you for your ministry.

NAOMI TYLER-LLOYD, USA
Neville, it’s been a pleasure to serve with you for these past 10 years. You’ve shown yourself as a man of integrity who’s grace-filled. We wish you all the blessings that God has in store for you as you take this next step in your journey in ministry. God bless you. BWA will miss you. You’ll leave a tremendous void. Thank you so much for your service and for being who you are. To God be the glory. God bless you.

JEFF WILLETS, USA
The worldwide family of Baptists owes a great debt of gratitude to Neville Callam as he served us with integrity and outstanding leadership during his 10 years as general secretary of the BWA. It’s been a great joy to know Neville and we wish him well.

EMMANUEL MCCALL, USA
I served two churches as an interim pastor in the Atlanta area. Both churches had special events to which we invited you as the premier Baptist in the world. Thank you for responding. Those churches will forever be grateful for your presence. Wish you the best in the days to come.

JAN SAETHRE, NORWAY
Greetings from Norway, the country with the most northern Baptist churches in the world. I thank you for your ministry as general secretary of the BWA. I wish you inspiring days as you follow the call and continue serving the Lord.

BURCHELL TAYLOR, JAMAICA
It is a privilege and an honor to pay tribute to Rev. Neville Callam on his impending departure from the office of general secretary of the BWA. Rev. Mr. Callam has been a pioneer and game changer in assuming the post and pursuing his tasks. He has proven to be a great human being, a Spirit-led administrator with a keen mind, a pastor’s heart and the soul of a Christian brother at all times; some of which have not been the easiest of all times. But to God be the glory, great things he has done.

CAWLEY BOLT, JAMAICA
One of the blessings I’ve had is the friendship I’ve had with Neville that has lasted over many years. He has proven to be a solid and true friend. I’ve observed his dedication and passion to fulfill whatever it is to which God has called him. As he goes into retirement, I know he will still be open to the leading of Almighty God. May God continue to bless you and may you continue to be open to his leading and guidance even in your retirement.
DURO AYANRINOLA, NIGERIA
On behalf of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, I appreciate Dr. Neville Callam for providing dynamic leadership for BWA for 10 years; being an epitome of integrity and courage and an erudite scholar of international repute. Baptists in Africa appreciate you, celebrate you and wish you happy retirement.

HORACE AND BERYL RUSSELL, USA
We wish Neville all the best for the future. He’s been a good person, a good friend. We have watched Neville and Dulcie through the years. We were privileged to be at their wedding and were thrilled when he accepted the position with BWA. He has done a terrific job, nothing less than we would have expected. We wish both well as they go into the future.

JOHN UPTON, USA
A personal word of appreciation to Neville Callam and on behalf of all Virginia Baptists to our general secretary for 10 years of thoughtful, wise leadership that Neville has provided for the BWA. Every issue that we faced, every concern that came before us, you gave us occasion to think more deeply about those issues and to think through all of them theologically. Because of your leadership all of us are better global Baptists, and we are certainly better kingdom citizens because of your leadership and friendship to all of us. Thank you so much for these 10 years of dedicated service.

KOFFI KPMGMBE, TOGO
I appreciate and commend Rev. Dr. Neville Callam. Thank you for your 10 years of service. I remember when we met during the Emerging Leaders Network meeting in Ghana and traveling together from the Czech Republic to Leipzig in Germany. This was a unique experience. God bless you for your service, for all the changes and everything you brought to our global family. God bless you and I wish you all the best.

LEO THORNE, USA
Neville has been God’s gift to BWA. During the past decade he has used his God-given gifts and talents in a superb way. He has faithfully followed God with integrity, high standards and quality. He has brought BWA to a place where we can rest, knowing we have had a good leader. We will be sorry to see him go. You have done a great job. Your legacy will remain.

YVONNE MARTINEZ-THORNE, USA
I have been so pleased with his leadership. I have watched Neville over many years and he was the likely one to emerge as a leader. He has been faithful in that leadership, advancing the ministries of women, which have been important not only for women clergy but also of staff. That has really been special. He has lifted up the standard of the BWA in representing many of the conventions that make up this glorious organization. We will miss him.

GANOUNE DIOP, GENERAL SECRETARY, CONFERENCE OF SECRETARIES OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD COMMUNIONS
Our God, Lord and Savior, has carved you a space of credibility, having a good reputation among your peers, leaders of the Christian World Communions (CWCs). Every time you speak – and I can witness to that – leaders listen. You displayed giftedness in our midst. Thank you for who you have been among us. Because of you, the BWA has gained high recognition and a good reputation. Your brilliance of mind and wordsmith capabilities were valuable assets to the group of distinguished leaders of the CWCs. We have been blessed by your presence and participation in the weaving of the torn parts of the body of Christ. Thank you for the part you played in the restoration of the fragmentation of the church our Lord, Savior and high priest prayed for. We are and will be ever grateful to our God and to you.

FORMER BWA STAFF

DENTON LOTZ, BWA GENERAL SECRETARY EMERITUS
It’s hard to believe that 10 years ago, after 27 years of service to the BWA, I said farewell and welcomed you. Now we’re saying farewell to you. You came at a very difficult time in the BWA. You had to implement the 21st Century monumental document that brought many problems but also joy to many people. You led the BWA into the 21st century and you did it with great skill and great loyalty. I’m glad you always bring the BWA General Council back to Jesus Christ. Your articles and editorials always concentrate on who Jesus is. For that I’m grateful. You have a lot of life left in you. May God bless you and keep you.

WENDY RYAN, FORMER BWA DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Before I came to South Africa I was, for 17 years, director of Communications for the BWA. I am delighted and honored to give greetings to our retiring general secretary, Neville Callam; a fellow Caribbean leader who has led Baptists around the world with integrity, great clarity of thought, strength, compassion and love for God’s people everywhere. Neville and Dulcie, I wish you God’s best in the next step of your lives.

ROTHANGLIAN CHHANGTE, FORMER DIRECTOR, BAPTIST WORLD AID
Neville, it was an honor and privilege to work with you. I appreciated your wise counsel and strong support for women in ministry. I admire the meticulousness and thoroughness with which you approach your work, setting high standards for yourself and expecting the same from your staff. You pushed us to excel and encouraged us to do our best. Sometimes the humility hid the breadth and depth you brought to your work. An ethicist par excellence, you led the BWA through turbulent times. You’ve made it a more inclusive place for people of color and women, more ecumenical, brought new vigor into our theological discussions and engagements and taught us how to live and celebrate with our diversity in unity. You will be a difficult act to follow. Thank you for the ways you’ve led the BWA in these last 10 years. I wish you and Dulcie well as you begin a new chapter. I look forward to reading a few new books published by you. May God bless you and keep you in his care.

JUDY CAMPBELL, FORMER BWA ASSISTANT ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST
From the beginning of his tenure as general secretary, Neville has been intensely devoted to the BWA. He worked tirelessly to further its influence, improve its operations, understand the situation of each member body and to build stronger relationships with other faith groups. I was privileged and honored to work under and with Neville, to call him boss and also friend. Neville, as you retire, I wish you all the best of a well deserved relaxation. But I think that is not what really makes you happy. So, I wish you instead joy and contentment in whatever you decide to pursue.
“Any organization that seeks to serve a worldwide movement to the glory of God needs to develop a clear self-consciousness that is anchored to the basis of its existence and also foundational for the mission it espouses.”

– NEVILLE CALLAM
With John Graz, former secretary-general of the International Religious Liberty Association

Callam greeted by Audrey Marks, Jamaica Ambassador to the United States

With John Graz, former secretary-general of the International Religious Liberty Association

Callam with wife, children and grandchildren (left); Baptist Convention of Kenya General Secretary Peter Olomago (right)
NEVILLE TRIBUTES CONTINUED

FAUSTO VASCONCELOS, FORMER DIRECTOR, MISSION, EVANGELISM AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
Our family is praying God’s abundant blessings upon you, Dulcie and your family as you continue to serve him. I will always remember and cherish the times together, the friendship, fellowship we enjoyed, along with other colleagues and staff of the BWA. Especially those end-of-the day talks and chats. May the Lord bless you and keep you in his peace. And please, let us meet together in Rio in 2020.

MINNIE JACKSON, FORMER ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, YOUTH DEPARTMENT; RECEPTIONIST
Dr. Callam is truly a humble person, a great organizer, an excellent manager and a true friend to the BWA. He is a leader and friend to his staff. He did not give himself credit for accomplishments and work of the office but was inclusive of the whole staff; attributes of a great CEO. He gave his all. The BWA will be indebted to him for many years to come because of his unwavering dedication, service and contributions to God’s work and to God’s people. May God richly bless you and your family. Many lives have been enriched and made stronger.

CURRENT STAFF

SHANNON COWETT, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, COMMUNICATIONS; MEJ
Thank you for being a wonderful boss and friend. It’s been a true joy to work with you. You’ve brought the BWA staff together like a family; you truly care about us and the BWA and it shows in everything you do. You’re inspiring, kind, fair and funny. I want to say thank you for everything. I appreciate you so much. You’ll be deeply missed. Now, I challenge you to try and rest. Good luck.

JULIE JUSTUS, MEMBER SERVICES MANAGER; EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE GENERAL SECRETARY
Neville, thank you for being a good boss and a great friend. Thank you for caring about my family, your interest and concern for all the staff. We appreciate how you increase our knowledge of the worldwide Baptist family.

ERON HENRY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS
Neville puts everything into whatever he does. He has done the same at the BWA. He has brought a great deal of discipline into the operations of the office and enabled us to function at a very high level. We do appreciate this. We wish you and Dulcie all the best in your future endeavors. We will truly miss you.

TRISHA MILLER MANARIN, COORDINATOR, MISSION, EVANGELISM AND JUSTICE
Neville’s life is grounded in a deep commitment to the triune God. His love for God overflows as he serves first as a pastor and theologian, then an administrator. I have grown to appreciate Neville’s direct and honest approach – speaking truth, allowing those of us who work with him to know where he stands all the while trusting his pastoral and theological foundation. He advocates for and supports the staff. I will miss his depth of understanding, his pastoral care and his humor. I give thanks for the opportunity to work beside Neville and share in the Good News.

KATHE TRAYNHAM, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT
General Secretary, thank you for your decade-plus of strong, faithful leadership, especially in your collegial approach to all the staff. You have been the example of Christ to us throughout, with a pastor’s concern for our work, families and spiritual lives. We have watched with joy as you gently guided us to do the work God has given us at the BWA, never taking full credit for your own prodigious accomplishments, while always showing appreciation for any little thing we did. May God give you and Dulcie every blessing in this next phase of your life. We will long remember your laughter and integrity.

MIKE DELORME, BUILDING MANAGER
Neville, it has been nice to work with you over these past 10 years that seemed to have gone by much quicker than you think 10 years would feel. I know one thing you will not miss being here at the BWA is your trips downtown to Washington, DC, to the embassies for your travel visas. I hope you will have a fulfilling retirement and spending more time with your family and friends. May God bless you and your loved ones as you start this new chapter in your life. All God’s best!

CAROLINA MANGIERI, MEETING PLANNING MANAGER
It has been a joy and a privilege to work alongside such a man of God. In these past 10 years he has shown his compassion for the BWA, as well as other faith communions. I want to thank Neville for all his encouragement and support in the development of the ministries of the BWA, as well as his personal care for the wellbeing of the BWA staff. We will miss you and Dulcie. All God’s best in this new period of your life and ministry.

ASHLEY BECKER, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT; COMMUNICATIONS
Neville, it has been a privilege to learn from your leadership. You taught me the value of knowing facts before volunteering answers. You have shown the staff how to be faithful and diligent in our work, reminding each of us it is possible to balance deadlines with the vision of God’s Kingdom. I am also grateful for your friendship. The staff will miss hearing your stories at the lunch table with laughter, hearing you play Advent hymns on the piano and worshipping with you at Wednesday devotions. Even though we will miss your daily presence, we know that God continues to have so much in store for you and for your family. Blessings on this next step of your journey.

KENDRA EASTMAN, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, BWAID; FINANCE
Neville I appreciate you. Thank you for fulfilling your walk with God in your calling to be BWA general secretary. Thank you for being a great example of what Christian leadership looks like. I pray that your coming years are pleasant and peaceful, and that you actually get rest. God bless.

MONICA TEAL, COMPTROLLER
Many blessings on your journey into retirement. Aaron says it best in Numbers 6:24-26:
The Lord bless you and keep you the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.
CALLAM OFFERS THANKS

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to:

- Many Baptists from across the world who have accompanied me with their prayers and letters of encouragement.

- All who have served in any capacity in the organized life of the BWA. Several members of BWA committees provided me with true partnership in the necessary collaborative ministry BWA seeks to model and fulfill. To them I am very grateful.

- My predecessor, General Secretary Emeritus Denton Lotz and to former BWA directors, especially Tony Cupit and Wendy Ryan, for their counsel and advice, and

- David Maddox and Merle and Carolyn Fossen whose kindness to BWA staff members has been a source of real encouragement. For the last seven years, David traveled annually from Southern California to Northern Virginia to sponsor and host a Christmas luncheon to honor and encourage the BWA general secretary and staff. Similarly, Carolyn and Merle Fossen have remembered the BWA staff members at highpoints of each year in memorable ways. The acts of love and kindness extended to us will never be forgotten.

A special word of thanks is due to members of the BWA staff. I am grateful to current staff persons for extending themselves beyond the limits of their own job specifications and for cooperating to facilitate BWA’s ongoing ministry. I value the friendship these staff members have offered me.

During my tenure with BWA my wife, Dulcie, has spurned the limelight but has contributed immensely to the organization. She has offered me genuine love, invaluable friendship and wise counsel as I have sought to navigate the deep waters of the assignment as BWA general secretary. I remain totally indebted to her for her indispensable help.

Finally, I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to the God of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who enables and sustains all efforts in Christian service through the power of the Holy Spirit. God never failed me in any situation, but instead guided, enabled and consoled me on every occasion when challenges arose. To God be the glory!
SINCE SEPTEMBER 1, 2007, WHEN I COMMENCED SERVICE AS BWA GENERAL SECRETARY, many significant changes have taken place in the world. Over the period, Japan has been served by seven prime ministers, Australia and Italy by six each and the United Kingdom by four. In the United States, where the BWA international office is located – and this office is not a headquarters, it is really a secretariat – three different individuals have held the reins of government power, namely George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump. These have been years of real change.

The last 10 years represent a time when an ever widening circle of terrorist attacks enveloped the world, triggering insecurity among people on a global scale. It has been a time of enormous economic uncertainty.

In 2008, the USA financial markets suffered a meltdown which has been dubbed the Great Recession. This meltdown triggered memories of the Great Depression of the 1930s. In her 2014 Richard Dimbleby Lecture, Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, described the upheaval as “the 2008 crisis.” It started in the mortgage market of suburban USA and spread around the world.

This recession has had an adverse effect on the witness of the church community. BWA suffered severe loss in its investment portfolio. In 2008 alone, the value of BWA investments declined by US$1,743,924! This was a severe blow to BWA finances following the loss of more than US$700,000 at the Centenary Congress in Birmingham in 2005.

In early 2007, Richard Krejcir, of the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership, reported that every single year, during the period 1998-2006, more than 4,000 churches in USA closed their doors compared to just over 1,000 new “church starts” in the country. The situation was exacerbated by the 2008 crisis. Many churches that remained open faced decline in membership, attendance, or both. This has had a negative impact on numerous churches and church organizations. None more so than BWA, the only Christian World Communion that has the highest percentage of its stakeholders as US residents.

Many churches and Christian organizations have seen significant decline in their income. Some have felt compelled, at the local, state and national levels, to rethink their accustomed pattern of mission engagement, re-conceptualize the delivery of their ministry and downsize their staff. Many local churches have been forced to consider anew how to distribute funds earmarked for causes they usually support. At the same time, some churches and church organizations are embracing a new way of understanding membership. This is leading to a changed self-understanding resulting in churches and church bodies supporting organizations not as groups in which they are members, but as ministry partners and beneficiaries of their benevolence. Furthermore, they expect these beneficiaries to satisfy the criteria the donors establish for funding ministries.

The result is that translocal ecclesial bodies that continue to benefit from the kindness of these donors are expected to conduct themselves as fortunate and grateful beneficiaries. Surprisingly, a few of the BWA member bodies instituting these requirements have significant numerical representation in BWA governance. Some do not consider the notion of responsible Christian stewardship by collaborators in a project based on a voluntary membership and common vision an adequate framework for evaluating financial decision-making on the ecclesial front. Instead, they have borrowed theories and procedures that do not necessarily require or enjoy any theological warrant.

The current developments have their locus in the onward march of postmodernity, secularism and globalization. In such a setting, the revival of nationalism, the idealization of past years and the growth of individualism are creating much dissonance in people’s minds. Membership is no longer taken to imply shared responsibility.

In this context, BWA has sought to fulfill its ministry in a manner consistent with principles grounded in its divine vocation, as expressed by the BWA 21st Century Committee and received by the organization in 2005. BWA is “a global movement of Baptists sharing a common confession of faith in Jesus Christ bonded together by God’s love to support, encourage and strengthen one another while proclaiming and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit before a lost and hurting world.”

Excerpted from report to the BWA General Council, Bangkok, Thailand, July 2017
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES
BY NEVILLE CALLAM

AFTER THE LONG INCUMBENCY OF MY DISTINGUISHED PREDECESSOR, General Secretary Emeritus Denton Lotz, the Baptist World Alliance devoted an enormous amount of time to changing the structures guiding its operation and introducing new instruments designed to secure adherence to approved procedures. A remarkable rupture in BWA’s operation left some active BWA supporters confused and discouraged.

BWA has had to deal with the negative effects of some decisions taken by the organization in response to the work of the Implementation Task Force (ITF), which was established to routinize certain aspects of the approved 21st Century Committee Report.

Over the 2011–2014 period, much time was spent securing the organization’s cooperation in reversing certain decisions inspired by the ITF process. The success of this effort resulted from increasing awareness of the disruptive effects certain decisions had on the health of the BWA as a global ecclesial movement.

Over the last 10 years, much energy has been expended in re-conceptualizing and streamlining the organization’s operation based on the changes introduced in the 21st Century and ITF process. This includes developing profiles for each BWA ministry and creating new job specifications. New policy documents were created to clarify the purpose, and guide the operation, of BWA’s ministries, including BWAid.

In addition, the Fiscal Policy Manual was updated and approved and a new Human Resources Manual was created. Policy statements were introduced to convey the meaning of, and to describe an appropriate process for agreeing, resolutions in BWA.

Furthermore, BWA staff developed a tradition of increased internal consultation and collaboration in the delivery of the BWA mission – an indispensable tradition now put at risk by yet another recently commissioned review of the BWA staff structure.

Excerpted from report to the BWA General Council, Bangkok, Thailand, July 2017
They enjoy a koinonia, a communion, a fellowship, that may be said to represent nothing less than a participation in the life of God that is modeled on relations within the Trinity. This fellowship, this oneness, this solidarity is a gift from God and the fundamental role of the BWA is to give expression to it, to serve it and to advance its interests. As I said in an address I gave in 2007 at an American Baptist Churches USA-sponsored breakfast in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, BWA “is a privileged instrument of the worldwide Baptist movement.” And as I noted in Pursuing Unity and Defending Rights: The Baptist World Alliance at Work:

Baptists relate to each other on a worldwide level. This level comprehends all the other levels combined and includes an extremely complex set of interrelationships: at the personal and congregational levels; at the association and union/convention level; at the regional level, both as discrete entities and as entities in relation to each other; and at the level of institutions associated with Baptist churches.

Typical Baptist ecclesiology may comfortably negotiate relations at the local level. The complexity that attends relations at the worldwide level reflects either the mysterious dimension or else a peculiar limitation of Baptist ecclesiology. What is clear is that without harmonious relations at the various levels, relations at the global level might be neither vibrant nor sustainable from the merely human point of view.

Importantly, BWA is not itself the Baptist communion. That communion is the inheritance of the Baptist churches worldwide in their innermost relations. BWA’s vocation is to serve the communion of Baptist churches joined together in conventions, unions, associations, councils and churches – names that reflect the multiple ecclesial self-understandings of BWA member bodies – and also in national and international mission organizations, seminaries, universities and other associational groupings formed by Baptists.

As an instrument of the Baptist communion, BWA stands ready to receive into its fellowship Baptists from around the world. It is empowered to welcome applicant bodies that wish to live into the communion of Baptist churches worldwide. It has the responsibility of embracing them and, once they join the movement, to work with them to strengthen Baptist oneness.

Over the last 10 years, 24 new Baptist Groups have joined BWA. They have come from the various regions: All Africa Baptist Fellowship - 14, Asia Pacific Baptist Federation - 2, Caribbean Baptist Fellowship - 4, North American Baptist Fellowship - 2, and Union of Baptists in Latin America - 2.

As a typical Baptist organization, BWA does not direct its constituent members in their ministries. However, it jealously guards the unity of the Baptist communion from domination and dependency and from ecclesial imperialism or neo-colonialism. It fosters a mutuality of love and respect among Baptists that is hospitable to genuine partnership – a partnership that rejects any hint of superiority and eschews paternalism. Such is BWA’s vocation as a Christian World Communion (CWC) that grounds its existence not merely in Christological, but also in Trinitarianism, convictions.

Over the last 10 years, time-consuming efforts were made to address aspects of BWA’s self-understanding in theological, rather than merely political, strategic or utilitarian terms. Two of the very significant processes manifesting this approach were the discussion on the role of regional organizations in the life of the BWA and the development of a Covenant on Intra-Baptist Relations.

Perhaps no unanimity will ever attend the “resolution” of the difficult issues associated with these two vital matters. Especially when issues are perceived primarily within the perspective of constructs of power, participants in discussion on these matters are likely to remain disappointed. The rationale for the approach I have taken in addressing these matters is grounded in my understanding of how a global organization serves as a CWC with its roots grounded in a Trinitarian consciousness and its breadth established in churches with their unique cultures, histories and traditions.

**STEPS TOWARD GREATER UNITY**

Anyone who is familiar with the process whereby departments of BWA came into being knows the extent to which these ministries, with the exception of the Men’s Department, were not understood to be organically linked to BWA. Instead, they were

Whether people are young, middle-aged or old, female or male, lay or ordained, we all belong together in the global Baptist family.
seen primarily as parallel entities operating in cooperation with BWA.

The development of the departments was not based on an integrated and cooperative relationship between BWA and the youth, women’s and men’s movements, introduced in 1923, 1955, and 1960, respectively. Instead, in their earliest years, the movements of women, men and youth convened their meetings in conjunction with occasions when BWA held its conferences.

As time passed, the Women’s and Youth Departments have tended to drift away from any strong sense of being BWA ministries and have asserted their separate identities. The BWA decision to integrate the Baptist Youth World Conference and the Baptist World Congress into a single event is one effort to overcome the divide in the way the youth ministry operates. That it was from the Youth Department that the theme of the upcoming 2020 Congress emerged is a great sign of hope for a new way of cooperation.

One hopes that success will attend the effort to re-imagine BWA’s main quinquennial gathering. Moving away from a focus on competing interests, BWA has opted for a single multi-stream quinquennial event. Part of the thinking behind this development is the desire to cement the bonds of family within the BWA – the affirmation that the Baptist family belongs together.

Whether people are young, middle-aged or old, female or male, lay or ordained, we all belong together in the global Baptist family.

Excerpted from report to the BWA General Council, Bangkok, Thailand, July 2017

CALLAM BOOK REVEALS THE POWER OF HOLY COMMUNION TO HELP UNIFY CHRISTIANS

What can Christians do to cultivate the common bond that we share and to unite the people of God? According to Neville Callam, noted educator, theologian, ecumenist, pastor and retiring General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, we must discover the power of the Eucharist.

In his new book, From Fragmentation to Wholeness: Race, Ethnicity, and Communion, Callam examines the impact race and ethnicity often have in causing division in the church. He also examines how the rite of the Lord’s Supper (Eucharist) offers an opportunity for a shared identity in the midst of our diversity, through fellowship in the body of Christ and unification and inclusiveness in the Christian community.

“From Fragmentation to Wholeness is an urgently needed volume of profound reflection on the untapped power of Holy Communion as a force for reconciliation, healing and wholeness in the church and community,” states Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, executive director of American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

He adds, “Rarely in recent Baptist life has a global leader of Callam’s distinction and intellect blended this peculiar caliber of theological, pastoral, ecumenical and activist reflection into such an informative, compelling and accessible treatise. The church now has a fascinating new resource to accelerate our mission reach into the world.”

This timely book explores:
• Race—a manufactured diversity and the sin of racism
• Ethnicity—the borders used to establish exclusion
• Communion—as a way to celebrate inclusive community
• Caribbean theology—as a model for overcoming fragmentation by affirming imago dei across the multiple ethnic identities of the region

Dr. Callam journeys through God’s Word, encouraging Christians to cultivate the common bond that we share and to unite as the people of God.

Originally published by American Baptist News Service
STAFF TRIBUTE TO MINNIE JACKSON

Minnie Jackson was the longest serving staff member of the Baptist World Alliance. She has seen it through many transitions over the past three decades. While the times were challenging, she will tell you that many of these changes were positive, including greater diversity, increasing participation and deeper involvement.

Minnie herself has been part of that change. For some of us, she has been a big sister, for others, even a mother. What she carries, and what she takes with her, is a deep institutional knowledge of the BWA, an asset and a virtue that is irreplaceable.

When it comes to institutional knowledge, you either have it or you don’t. You can fake it, but not for long. It comes from long experience, deep insight and open awareness. When Minnie leaves, it is a hole that will be left unfilled for a very long time. A knowledge that goes deeper than written reports, adopted policies and programs and decisions made in meetings.

What can we say about our big sister, our mother? She has been a friend, a willing confidant to those of us who, while new or young, tried to wend our path into the BWA. She helped us to put the jigsaw puzzle together, to get a handle or a grip on things, to see our way forward, to avoid pitfalls and failures and mistakes. And when we do make the inevitable mistake and commit the occasional faux pas, Minnie is the one to provide a steady hand.

As the first to arrive in the mornings for most of her time at the BWA, sometimes as early as 5:30 or 6:00, Minnie was there to greet the day and in some sense, to prepare the day. How she did that for 30+ years is a mystery to some of us, being at her desk by 6:30 every morning for all that time.

Minnie sees what needs to be done, what many of us will not notice or even think of. Like, when the office had an outbreak of flu and knowing visitors were coming to the office, she took disinfectant wipes to wipe down countertops and clean off doorknobs, and spray cans to disinfect the air. The potted plants were regularly watered. She would send emails to the staff to “please clear your old stuff out of the refrigerator.” Some of these were in the fridge not just weeks, but for many months.

In other words, she went beyond whatever was on her timetable, on her calendar, on her schedule. She was not wedded to her desk, to her computer. While she got things done on schedule and on time, she knew that her responsibilities to the office and her colleagues did not end there.

Every year we enjoy a Minnie specialty. Though a Christmas baby, she joined those born in January in the celebration of her birthday. It is a Minnie specialty unlike any other.

The BWA staff inherited a German tradition. When a birthday comes, it is those who have the birthday, the celebrants, who provide a meal. For the majority of us, it is not much more than a snack. For Minnie, however, it is a full course, soul food, Southern American meal. With Minnie gone, this will be sorely missed.

Thank you, Minnie. You have been a true friend and colleague. We will miss you. Bon voyage, and God bless.

LAST WORD: LOOKING BACK, GOING FORWARD

In the quietness and stillness of my home, June 27, 2017, realization set in that in a few days I would no longer be a staff member of the Baptist World Alliance, an assignment given to me by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the year 1983.

I think of serving under three general secretaries – Gerhard Claas, Denton Lotz and Neville Callam – and the many directors, presidents and regional secretaries, each with unique and different leadership qualities and abilities to lead the BWA.

I think about many administrative coworkers I have served with on this journey. I think about being introduced to Youth Committee after Youth Committee member while serving in the Youth Department for 27 years and the many young people around in the world affected by the BWA.

I think about the Baptist Youth World Conferences, Baptist World Congresses, March Executive Committee meetings, General Councils (Annual Gatherings), the ups and the downs, member bodies coming and other matters that leave a positive impression on my life that took place in my travels to 23 countries.

I think about the changes that have taken place over the years. I have seen the BWA not only grow in member bodies, churches and individual members, but also in staff from only a few to as many as 22 staffers at one point in time. All served in the BWA offices housed in Washington, D.C., and the cities of McLean and Falls Church in Virginia in the United States.

The BWA has evolved from using duplicating copy machines with blue ink, fax machines, PCs, conference calls, printing labels, on-hand mailings of hundreds and sometimes thousands of letters weekly; to the most up to update technology, mailing houses, database, registration systems, emails, copying machines that scan, and scraping the Internet.

This truly has been an assignment of great joy and great expectation. I end my 34 years of service with the same joy, gratefulness and thanksgiving to Him for the opportunity to serve His people.

On behalf of the Jackson family, thank you to Dr. Neville Callam and the current leadership. The BWA, where I have spent half of my lifetime in His service, will always be in my prayers.
WHAT DOES THE REFORMATION HAVE TO DO WITH US BAPTISTS?

BY FRIEDRICH SCHNEIDER

When we think about the Reformation we become aware of our roots. Even though we are not directly “children of the Reformation” – Baptists only emerged 100 years later – we are part of the “Protestant family,” historically and also in denominational terms.

Historically speaking, the leaders of the Reformation and their writings have influenced us more than we are often aware. Despite the fact that our forefathers aspired to deduce the shape of the church directly from the New Testament, it would be naïve and arrogant to ignore the theological conditioning of church history. The very principle of consulting Scripture directly is an achievement of the Reformation.

Without Luther’s Bible translation, it would have been difficult to understand the Bible. Baptists have learned theological basics such as the concepts of the Eucharist or the church, and our way of discussing Scripture, mostly from the Swiss Reformation around Zwingli and Calvin. The so-called “left wing” of the Reformation – the Anabaptist movements that systematically implemented the approach of the Swiss Reformers – demanded the free choice of religion for everyone. Social justice was understood as an important concern of the Gospels and is part of our “DNA.”

We see ourselves as part of the big Protestant family. This is why we insist that “Protestant” in Germany does not mean only the Churches of the Protestant Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland – EKD), but also the free churches united in the Association of Protestant Free Churches (Vereinigung Evangelischer Freikirchen – VEF).

Working together as Protestants has proved valuable, not least in the wider ecumenical context of all Christian churches. But there are problems, such as licenses for religious education teachers or the recognition of free-church university degrees. Among Free Churches, there are reservations concerning ecumenical relationships. Still yet, we are family! We may not always appreciate everybody in our large family, but we still belong together!

CHALLENGES FROM THE REFORMATION THAT WE NEED TO ADDRESS TODAY

We like to claim that we have taken the ideas of the Reformation to their logical conclusion. Very early on, during the time of the Reformation itself, Anabaptists had the impression that Zwingli and others relied too much on the authorities. For Anabaptists, church and state should be separate.

Other ideas of the Reformation, such as the concept of the priesthood of all believers, were put impressively by Martin Luther (e.g. in his Sermon of the New Testament, that is of Holy Mass, 1520), “Therefore all Christian men are priests, all women priestesses, young or old, master or servant, mistress or maid, scholar or layman. Here is no difference, unless the faith be different.”

Later on, this was not altogether represented in the Lutheran Church. But we, too, took our time to implement this notion in all its consequences. Baptists claimed right from the start that all believers are technically allowed to do everything, even baptize, administer the Eucharist or preach. But women in the pulpit or as a pastor were not welcomed for a long time.

In other respects, too, the idea of the priesthood of all believers remains a challenge; everybody is allowed and supposed to join in sharing God’s love. Church ministries are based on the spiritual competence of individual members. The church is a spiritual community, living and serving together. That sounds good, but we need to keep giving it a concrete shape. Many congregations and regional associations lament the fact that they cannot find leaders or workers for all the jobs that need to be done. But when refugees came to Germany in large numbers, suddenly it was possible to find committed helpers everywhere who invested a lot of time and money. Why? Because it was important! Do we sometimes expect commitment in areas that do not seem relevant anymore? And do we offer volunteers an attractive environment in the form of active participation or development of opportunities?

When Luther urged others to “learn the language of the man in the street,” it was first and foremost about the language of preaching. Nowadays we have to ask who the message is addressing. What does “the man in the street” need? Which questions are people asking? Do the answers of the church match those questions?

The leaders of the Reformation were up to date as far as the trends in society and current schools of thought were concerned. Reformation as an attitude means to address the challenges of the present. How does the kingdom of God reach people today?

As early as 1974, the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, decided that our times need a broadened

A central concern of any Reformation then and now is to rediscover and reanimate key tasks and messages of the church.
A THEOLOGY OF UNITY
CONTINUED

REFORMATIONAL PREACHING
BY TIMOTHY GEORGE

The preaching of the Gospel as a sacramental event is at the heart of Reformation theology. Preaching is also at the heart of Reformation faith—preaching as an indispensable means of grace and a sure sign of the true church.

Where is the church? According to Article VII of the Augsburg Confession (1530), the church is that place where the Word is purely preached and the sacraments are duly administered. The Second Helvetic Confession (1566) went even further when it declared that “the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.”

Preaching—unlike the printing press—was not a new invention of the Reformation era. Far from it. Think of Augustine and Chrysostom in the early church, Bernard of Clairvaux, John Hus and the many mendicant friars who fanned out across Europe in the Middle Ages.

St. Francis preached the Gospel to a Muslim sultan, and Savonarola declared God’s judgment on the sinful leaders of Florence. Bernardino of Siena, the great Franciscan herald, preached to throngs in the fifteenth century, calling on his listeners to repent, confess their sins and go to Mass.

The Protestant reformers knew this tradition and built upon it, but they also transformed it in two important respects.

First, they made the sermon the centerpiece of the regular worship of the church. Prior to the Reformation, the sermon was mostly an ad hoc event reserved for special occasions or seasons of the liturgical cycle, especially Christmas and Easter. Most sermons were preached in town squares or open fields.

The reformers brought the sermon back inside the church and gave it an honored place in the public worship of the gathered community. The central role of preaching in Protestant worship can be seen in the way the pulpit was raised to a higher elevation as families gathered around with their children to hear the Word proclaimed.

Second, the reformers introduced a new theology of preaching. They were concerned that the Bible take deep root in the lives of the people. The Word of God was meant not only to be read, studied, translated, memorized and meditated on. It was also to be embodied in the life and worship of the church. What might be called the practicing of the Bible, its embodiment, was most clearly expressed in the ministry of preaching.

Luther believed that a call to the preaching office was a sacred trust and should not be used for selfish purposes. “Christ did not establish the ministry of proclamation to provide us with money, property, popularity, honor or friendship,” he said.

Preachers should be wary of listeners who are too complimentary of their sermons, for flattery can have a sinister outcome. Puffed-up preachers are likely to think to themselves: “This you have done, this is your work, you are a first-rate man, the real master.” Such conceit is not even worth throwing to the dogs, Luther said. Faithful preachers should teach only the Word of God and seek only his honor and praise. “Likewise, the hearers should also say: ‘I do not believe in my pastor, but he tells me of another Lord whose name is Christ; Him he shows me.’”

To rediscover the Gospel and systematically implement it in and with the congregation, that is Reformation. And that concerns us more than anything else!

Friedrich Schneider is coordinator for Theology, Church and Society, Union of Evangelical Free Churches (Baptists) in Germany

Translated from the German by Dorothee Dziewas

This article initially appeared in First Things, January 9, 2017
The Lutheran World Federation has insisted that the 500th anniversary of the continental Reformation should be commemorated, rather than celebrated. Furthermore, they have insisted that, bearing in mind the extent of the rapprochement that has taken place between the principal traditions in the sixteenth century Reformation and also the way in which the Reformation has influenced the church worldwide, the current commemoration should be ecumenical in nature.

Leaders of the Union of Baptists of Latin America (UBLA), aware that the movement in which they share is a post-Reformation event, decided on a special way to commemorate the Reformation anniversary. They assembled a group of eight scholars and invited them to reflect on the Reformation. Their purpose was not to rehearse the oft-repeated themes of the Reformation. Instead, their concern was to probe the intersection between the Reformation and the life and ministry of the Baptist movement in contemporary Latin America. Readers will find help in understanding how Latin American Baptists understand the heritage of the Reformation in their location.

Nora Lozano offers a perspective on the first three “solas” of the Reformation and comments on how these affect the beliefs and lives of evangelical Christians in Latin America.

Harold Seguro probed the influence of mystical Christianity on Martin Luther and drew our considerations deemed relevant for Christian spirituality and leadership in his region.

Pablo Deiros investigated Luther’s influence in the field of education and identified seven marks of the approach to education that the church should adopt today.

Parish Jacome painted a pastoral picture of the Reformation from a Latin American perspective. He proposed the anchoring of an understanding of the pastoral in communitarian, rather than individualistic, terms. He also drew out the implication of this approach for the church’s response to the concrete reality of contemporary life in his region.

Beginning with reflections on the interplay between context and reform in the sixteenth century, Dinorah Mendez analyzed the implications of the “double movement” between context and reform for her region. She insisted that an evaluation of any significant movement in the life of the church yesterday or today should not ignore the resulting social consequences.

Raimundo Barreto, Jr. probed the Reformation to evince considerations related to the development of Protestant social thought in Latin America. He identified five moments in the emergence of Christian social ethics in the region and proposed considerations that are pertinent to the onward march of especially indigenous and Pentecostal forms of Christianity.

Richard Serrano described the identity and destiny of Protestantism in Latin America in light of modernity. He identified some opportunities that are present within the challenging developments he named and he expressed the hope that churches in his region will embrace these as they prosecute the mission of God.

Pablo Moreno, focused not on Martin Luther and the continental Reformation but on Balthasar Hubmaier and the Radical Reformation. Identifying three main phases in Hubmaier’s life and influence, Moreno noted the continuities and discontinuities present. Moreno challenged his readers to prayer and deep reflection before active engagement in any campaign for change.

UBLA must be commended for producing an accessible work that targets church leaders and workers in the region without sacrificing serious scholarship. We encourage everyone to read the book and reflect with others on its contents.

LATIN AMERICANS HOST REGIONAL CONGRESS

More than 300 participants attended the 2017 Congress and Assembly of the Union of Baptists in Latin America (UBLA) from August 15-18, in the city of Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil.

Neville Callam, general secretary of the World Baptist Alliance, delivered an inaugural greeting with the touching words, “To behold with the eyes of Jesus Christ.”

Callam was honored with a plaque in appreciation for his support to UBLA, one of six regional fellowships of the BWA, and in recognition for his time of service as BWA general secretary.

A book to mark the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation was launched. Several of its authors who wrote various chapters were present at the congress.

Outgoing UBLA President Ivan Martinez from Venezuela charged attendees to “Transform cities [and] impact new generations.”

“We are a people of excellence, because we are the people of God,” Martinez declared. “We are a royal priesthood, we are a chosen people, we are a people that were bought through the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we could proclaim and impact new generations.”

Other speakers were Anna Grellert, Sócrates Oliveira, Fernando Brandão and Edimilson Vila Nova, all from Brazil; Tomás Mackey and Pablo Deiros from Argentina; Richard Serrano from Venezuela; Pablo Moreno from Colombia; Abraham Cervantes from Mexico; and Daniel Avila from Ecuador.

A new slate of leaders and officers were elected for the period 2017-2022. Argentinian Alberto Prokopchuk, former BWA regional secretary for Latin America and past general secretary of UBLA, was elected president. Sócrates Oliveira of Brazil is vice president.
REGENT ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH IN FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE, the oldest Baptist church in Africa, celebrates its 225th Anniversary in 2017.

The congregation was founded by David George, an enslaved African American in Virginia, in the United States, who escaped first to Savannah in the US state of Georgia, then to Nova Scotia, Canada, before traveling to present day Freetown.

George is alleged to have other firsts. He cofounded the Silver Bluff Baptist Church in South Carolina, US, in 1775, which is reputed to be the first black congregation in the United States, and other Baptist congregations in Nova Scotia.

According to the official history of Regent Road Baptist Church:

Among the 1,200 freed slaves brought to the New Colony in 1792 were Methodists, members of the Countess of Huntingdon Connection, and Baptists. After a tiring and distressing three month voyage, these people gathered around the Cotton tree for a Thanksgiving Service. The Baptists in the group were accompanied by their pastor, The Rev. David George, himself a freed slave, a Virginia-born Baptist preacher. He soon constituted his people into a Baptist Church, the first to be established on the Continent of Africa.

Eron Henry, BWA associate director for Communications, was preacher for the anniversary service held on June 11. In commending the congregation, Henry said, “what you have achieved is monumental and is not to be gainsaid.” He declared that “as the oldest Baptist church in Africa, you have blazed the trail for every Baptist on the continent.” They “led the way” and “were the pioneers.”

He told the packed congregation, included leaders from other churches and government and local officials, that the BWA was “pleased to identify with you in your celebrations and giving of thanks to God for having led you thus far.”

Referring to the theme, “Rejoice & Celebrate,” Henry told the worshippers that “this rejoicing and celebrating comes from having been through 225 years during which God has carried you through the hard times and the good times, the moments of triumphs and defeats, the times of exhilaration and pain.”

He said “you rejoice and celebrate because God has never abandoned you, has never left you alone. You were never forsaken…. God has been with you because even when darkness seems to arise, God is there riding on the clouds.”

Beginning in January 2017, 225 persons received medallions in recognition of their service to church, community and country. The last set of medals was presented at the service on June 11. Among those receiving medallions were Henry and Samuel Reeves, pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Monrovia, Liberia, the second oldest Baptist church in Africa. Providence, founded in 1821 by formerly enslaved African Americans, celebrates its 200th anniversary in 2021.
BAPTIST ELECTED HEAD OF WORLD’S LARGEST UNITED CHURCH

Andre Bokundoa-bo-Likabe, general secretary of the Baptist Community of the Congo River and a former vice president of the Baptist World Alliance, has been elected president of the Church of Christ in the Congo (CCC).

CCC, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), is the largest united church and the second largest Protestant denomination in the world and is often simply referred to as the Protestant Church. It includes “communities” of churches that are Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, Methodist, Mennonite, Lutheran, Evangelical, Moravian, etc., in a country that is larger geographically than all of Western Europe.

The CCC provides a central administration and a spiritual forum for the dozens of Protestant denominations that it includes. It functions under a national “synod” and an executive committee.

Bokundoa’s election took place during the 17th National Synod of the CCC on August 19. He succeeds Pierre Marini Bodho who was head of the CCC for 19 years.

Bokundoa, elected president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship in 1999, is a specialist in Semitic languages. He studied Hebrew and Ugaritic at the French Biblical and Archaeological School of Jerusalem and Old Testament languages at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom.

He pastored various congregations prior to becoming general secretary of the Baptist Community of the Congo River in 1998, one of several Baptist “communities” in the DRC. He taught at the Baptist Seminary in Kinshasa, the DRC capital; and in the faculty of theology of the Protestant Union of Congo, a multidenominational school.

A WWA vice president from 2005-2010, Bokundoa is a former member of the BWA General Council, the Executive Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee, the Membership Committee, the Commission on Christian Ethics and the Academic and Theological Education Workgroup.

Andre Bokundoa-bo-Likabe, new president of the Church of Christ in the Congo

The CCC president holds the rank of bishop and serves six-year terms, subject to re-election.

DOZENS OF BAPTISTS PERISH IN SIERRA LEONE FLOODS

More than 80 Baptists are among the nearly 500 who have died due to landslides and severe flooding in the West African country of Sierra Leone. More than 600 people were missing.

One of Africa’s worst flooding-related disasters in years occurred on August 14 when the side of Mount Sugar Loaf collapsed after heavy rain, burying parts of Regent, a town on the outskirts of the capital, Freetown. More than 3,000 people were left homeless and hundreds of buildings were damaged or destroyed by the mudslides.

Samuel Conteh, coordinator of the Social Ministry Department of the Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone (BCSL), said, “the mudslide was triggered by a heavy down pour of continuous rainfall that destroyed part of the mountain and as the water flowed down the hill, trees and other stones were carried along.”

Conteh told the Baptist World Alliance that, “within less than 24 hours, almost greater parts of the Western and Central part of the city (where a majority of Baptist churches are located) were seriously affected, as a result of huge quantities [of] water.”

He said 60 members of Bethany Baptist Church in West Freetown have died. Hillside Baptist Church in Central West Freetown lost two members.

Brickson Sam, former pastor of Victory Baptist Church in Freetown, who now resides in the United States, reported that about 20 members of that congregation lost their lives.

Almost 400 Baptist households were affected by the disaster. About 25 houses for members of Awesome Praise Baptist Church were destroyed, 13 for members of the Hillside Baptist Church and four from the Bethany Baptist Church.
Liberia’s 170th Independence: Reflecting on the Role of Liberian Baptists

By Olu Q. Menjay

July 26, 2017, marked the 170th anniversary of the establishment of Liberia as a sovereign nation. As president of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention (LBMEC), I was honored to participate in the culminating celebratory event, the National Thanksgiving and Intercessory Worship Service, organized by the Liberia Council of Churches.

My task and pleasure was to offer a prayer for peace and reconciliation on behalf of the nation. As I prepared and spoke the prayer, I carried the burden of hope of Liberian Baptists. Before there was the Republic of Liberia there were Baptists in the land, seeking freedom in a new place, building cities, making farms and, of course, establishing churches.

Baptists around the world can be encouraged by reminders of how our forebears shaped and continue to shape Liberia.

Historical Role
Looking back to the years before the Republic, 1822 to 1847, we see strong Baptist influences. Rev. Lott Cary was among the first settlers. A freed slave from Richmond, Virginia, in the United States, he was a learned minister. He was the founding pastor of Providence Baptist Church (PBC) in Liberia. Cary, too, emerged as the vice governor of the colony. He was a civil servant and church leader.

When the Liberian Declaration of Independence was signed on July 26, 1847, Baptists were prominent, including the drafter of the Declaration, Rev. Hilary Teague as well as Samuel Benedict and Rev. John Day. The document was signed and celebrated at the Providence Baptist Church. Visitors to Monrovia still visit the original PBC edifice, fondly called The Nation’s Cornerstone.

Public Role
Concomitant service to church and public spheres always has been acceptable in Liberia. There is a thin line between church and state.

Baptists in Liberia held public offices while maintaining vigorous roles in the church.


The founding president of the LBMEC, Rev. Dr. Joseph J. Cheeseman, served as the 12th President of Liberia (1892 to 1896) and, at the same time, founding pastor of First Baptist Church, Edina, Grand Bassa Liberia. Rev. Dr. William R. Tolbert, Jr., a local Baptist pastor and president of LBMEC (1948-1980), served simultaneously as Liberian vice president under William V. S. Tubman until 1971. After President Tubman’s death, Vice President Tolbert ascended to the presidency of Liberia (1971-1980). Dr. Tolbert became the first Black president of the Baptist World Alliance in 1965 while he served as vice president of Liberia. He was an advocate of economic empowerment, especially in his noted goal of moving Liberians out of poverty, which he coined as from “mat to mattress.”

Deacon Richard A. Henries, chair of the

Today, the schools in operation represent some of the best secondary schools in the nation. These schools are R. B. Richardson Baptist High School in Zwedru, Kwendin Baptist Mission School, Levi H. Martin High School in Sanniquellie and the Ricks Institute in Virginia, Liberia.

Some BCCL leaders and volunteers have visited the area to take inventory of those affected to see what can be done to help them,” Conteh said.

Donations may be made at www.bwanet.org/online-giving or sent to:

Baptist World Aid
c/o Baptist World Alliance
405 North Washington Street
Falls Church, VA 22046 USA

ULY 26, 2017, MARKED THE 170TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LIBERIA as a sovereign nation. As president of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention (LBMEC), I was honored to participate in the culminating celebratory event, the National Thanksgiving and Intercessory Worship Service, organized by the Liberia Council of Churches.

The service convened at the Sacred Heart Cathedral Catholic Church in Monrovia, Liberia’s capital. In attendance were Liberia’s President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, along with business and political dignitaries, church leaders and representatives from Liberia’s broader civic societies and other non-Christian communities of faith.

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Board of Deacons, PBC, served as Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Liberia. Importantly, Deacon Henries was one of the persons who signed the United Nations Charter in 1945 on behalf of Liberia in San Francisco, USA.

**LIBERIA EDUCATION**

Baptists in Liberia saw the provision of quality education as the only reliable foundation upon which a nation can be built. They saw the offering of relevant education as a major priority. They established more than 50 schools (elementary, junior and senior high schools) throughout the country. Many did not survive political and economic crises over the years.

Today, the schools in operation represent some of the best secondary schools in the nation. These schools are R. B. Richardson Baptist High School in Zwedru, Kwendin Baptist Mission School, Levi H. Martin High School in Sanniquellie and the Ricks Institute in Virginia, Liberia.

Apart from Kwendin School, all of the schools are providing relevant education to Liberians. Ricks Institute, established 1887, continues to be the oldest standing and quality boarding school in Liberia. Ricks Institute continues to attract students from all over Liberia.

The Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary, established in 1976, became the only accredited theological institution in Liberia to provide relevant theological education. To date, the seminary has trained more than 700 pastors and church leaders, regardless of denominational affiliations, who are enjoying significant roles in the church and public life.

**RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT**

Baptists in Liberia were active participants, through its meaningful global partners, in providing relief and development during crisis times. Two recent crises include the Liberian Civil War, which claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people and the destruction of noticeable infrastructure; and the deadly Ebola crisis in West Africa. Liberian Baptists, through partnerships, especially with the BWA, were visible and positive participants in the national goals to eradicate the Ebola virus. We served as feet and hands of Jesus in providing help to the needy and relief to people who were in social and economic bondage.

A signature program during the Ebola crisis was the “Care for Hundred” that provided enormous relief to the Liberia Baptist Seminary and other institutions across the nation. This program provided needed food items for Liberians.

As we celebrate 170 years as a sovereign nation, Liberian Baptists will continue to make significant impact in the lives of its people. Liberian Baptists remain a forceful and sometimes lonely voice on national debate advocating for religious tolerance. We will not stop serving, teaching and preaching ‘til Jesus Christ comes.

**Olu Menjay was a BWA vice president, 2010-2015; president, Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention; principal, Ricks Institute, Liberia; and assistant professor, Mercer University’s Roberts Department of Religion, Georgia, USA**
CALLAMS VISIT SRI LANKA

Following the Baptist World Alliance annual gathering in Bangkok, Thailand, in early July, General Secretary Neville Callam and wife, Dulcie, visited the island of Sri Lanka to participate in events planned by the Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya.

Baptist witness began in the South Asian country in 1812 when British missionary James Charter relocated with his family from Myanmar (Burma) to Sri Lanka, known then as Ceylon.

Callam held several meetings while in Sri Lanka. Baptist leaders and pastors gathered at the historic Cinnamon Gardens Baptist Church in the heart of Colombo. One of the oldest Baptist churches in Asia, it celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2013. “The meeting included an exchange of ideas by participants” and “included missionaries from South Korea,” Callam stated.

The Sri Lanka visit ended with a dinner meeting with heads of churches and officials of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka. Callam said “participants in the meeting symbolized the ecumenical spirit that exists in the country where Protestant and Evangelical and Pentecostal churches participate in what is one of the oldest Christian Councils in the world.”

Sri Lanka experienced a civil war that lasted more than 25 years, from July 1983 to May 2009. “In this majority Buddhist country, the church is seeking to make its contribution to peace and reconciliation, which is a required ongoing project in this beautiful country,” Callam declared.

The BWA leader toured the Baptist Village Ampegama, which was constructed by Baptist World Aid following the Asian tsunami in December 2004. About 35,000 Sri Lankans were killed by the tsunami, which devastated parts of the island’s coast. The Baptist village comprises 72 houses, some of which have been enlarged. It includes a school that was opened in 2016, as well as a center where Baptists conduct worship services.

Neville and Dulcie Callam welcomed at the Baptist village by schoolchildren.

Callam with Christian leaders at the Theological College of Lanka, in Sri Lanka.
THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THAILAND

The Baptist World Alliance has four member organizations in Thailand: the 12th District of Church of Christ in Thailand, Thailand Baptist Convention, Thailand Karen Baptist Convention and Thailand Lahu Baptist Convention.

Baptists in Thailand are part of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), an umbrella group of Protestant church bodies in the Southeast Asian country, which is predominantly Buddhist. The current CCT president is Taweesak Mahachawaroj, president of the 12th District of Church of Christ and a member of the BWA General Council.

French Roman Catholic priests began work in Thailand (Siam) in 1662. From 1828 onward, several Protestant missionary groups started mission work in the kingdom, but by the end of the 19th century it was almost entirely the responsibility of the Presbyterian Church in the USA. This mission became the Church of Christ in Thailand in 1934.

After World War II other Protestant groups began to enter the country; some affiliated with the CCT, others did not. By 1976 the Church of Christ in Thailand was a self-governing Thai church.

The CCT represents half of the Protestant community in Thailand. The church runs two universities, two theological seminaries, about 30 schools, a Student Christian Center, seven hospitals, and a rehabilitation institute for leprosy patients and other physically disadvantaged persons.

The CCT has played an important role in the development of the musical life of Thailand. Social work is carried out in the slum communities of Bangkok and agricultural and community development programs are conducted in rural areas.

The church organized relief work among Cambodian refugees in the 1970s. In cooperation with other agencies, it continues to play a part in the work among refugees, who are mainly from neighboring Myanmar.

The CCT is a member of a national committee representing all Protestant groups in the country. It joins the Roman Catholic Church in arranging services during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Through its Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture it seeks to foster interreligious understanding and dialogue.

This article includes information from the website of the World Council of Churches, www.oikoumene.org

AT LEAST 500 BAPTISTS AFFECTED BY HEAVY FLOODING IN NEPAL

Beginning on August 10, the South Asian country of Nepal has been affected by devastating floods, compounding earlier flood rains in the month of June.

Twenty-nine of the 75 districts in the Himalayan country were inundated by torrential rain. About 150 people have been killed and 90,000 homes destroyed in what the United Nations called the worst flooding in Nepal in a decade.

Approximately 500 Baptists were among those affected.

At least five of the 16 churches known to have been damaged or destroyed were Baptist churches. “Many churches could not organize regular worship,” the Nepal Baptist Church Council (NBCC) told the Baptist World Alliance.

“The Nepal Baptist Church family is praying and contacting our people and organizations,” NBBC stated. “We are also collecting food, clothes and funds among our churches and individuals. Please be with us in prayer.”

Indications are that the heavy flood rains in Nepal are part of a broader monsoon
FLOODING IN NEPAL CONTINUED

system that has affected parts of India and Bangladesh, where more than 1,200 people in the three countries have died. Thousands of villages were cut off and people were deprived of food and clean water for days.

The BWA sent an initial sum of US $10,000 to Nepal for flood relief.

Donations may be made at www.bwanet.org/online-giving or sent to:
Baptist World Aid
c/o Baptist World Alliance
405 North Washington Street
Falls Church, VA 22046
USA

NEWEST BWA MEMBER BODY HOLDS CONFERENCE

APPROXIMATELY 1,000 PERSONS ATTENDED THE 5TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE of the Zomi Baptist Churches of America (ZBCA) in the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma, in the United States, from July 28-30.

Baptist work among the Zomi began in Tulsa in the 1970s when one of its patriarchs, Chin Do Kham, became a student at the Oral Roberts University.

The Zomi, or “Zo People,” an ethnic minority in Myanmar, Bangladesh and India, are predominantly Christian, a significant number being Baptists. Over the last decade, large numbers of Zomi arrived in the United States as political or economic refugees due to repressive policies in Myanmar.

ZBCA, which includes 33 churches in 29 cities and 19 states, was formed in November 2014 after organization work began in 2012. It received Baptist World Alliance membership in July 2017 at the Annual Gathering in Bangkok, Thailand.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam addressed the conference on July 29, where special guest singers from Myanmar offered musical presentations. More than 200,000 Zomi in Myanmar, India, Bangladesh and Thailand followed the service and other events at the conference online.

“We are so grateful to have Dr. Callam in our conference. His message was so inspired and applicable for all the Zomi Christians,” said Pau Khan Khai, ZBCA general secretary. “We the ZBCA are excited and happy to become a family member of BWA. We want to be a blessing to USA and Myanmar.”
THE BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE RESPONDED TO A SERIES OF WEATHER RELATED DISASTERS ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

C A T E G O R Y F I V E H U R R I C A N E I R M A, which formed on August 30 and dissipated on September 16, devastated parts of the Caribbean and several southeastern states of the United States, especially Florida, while Hurricane Maria did much damage in parts of the Caribbean.

Reports are that the island of Barbuda, which shares statehood with Antigua, suffered 90 percent damage from Hurricane Irma. At least 10 people were known to have died in Cuba amidst extensive damage. The island of Hispaniola, which includes the nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, suffered significant damage. The Bahamas experienced widespread devastation.

The US and British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, St. Maarten, Puerto Rico and the Turks and Caicos islands were also badly affected.

At least 24 people in the Caribbean were known to have died due to the Irma.

Much of Florida in the US was under water and long term damage is estimated to be in the tens of billions of dollars. The US states of Georgia and South Carolina and others experienced flooding and powerful winds.

Hurricane Maria struck in mid-September was a category five storm that devastated the islands of Puerto Rico and Dominica and severely affected the US and British Virgin Islands, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and parts of the Dominican Republic.

At least 60 people died and more than 30 went missing.

Communication from the various countries and territories in the Caribbean were difficult.

The BWA sent funds for immediate relief and were making provisions for additional assistance.

Donations may be made at www.bwanet.org/online-giving or sent to:
Baptist World Aid
c/o Baptist World Alliance
405 North Washington Street
Falls Church, VA 22046
USA
BWA PROVIDES ASSISTANCE FOR HURRICANE HARVEY RELIEF FUND

THE BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE sent an initial sum of US$15,000 to Baptists in Texas in the United States to assist those affected by Hurricane Harvey.

Harvey, which landed as a category 4 hurricane on the coast of Texas on August 25, caused widespread destruction in the Greater Houston/Southeast Texas region.

By August 29, 14 persons were known to have died. More than 300,000 people were left without electricity and billions of dollars in property damage was sustained.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam told David Hardage, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, that “the Baptist family worldwide is viewing with alarm recent developments in the state of Texas resulting from the passage of Hurricane Harvey.”

Callam said “the scenes of devastation are heart-rending and we are deeply concerned about the suffering people are facing.” He assured Baptists in the state “of our prayers for all who suffer.”

Donations may be made at www.bwanet.org/online-giving or sent to:
Baptist World Aid
c/o Baptist World Alliance
405 North Washington Street
Falls Church, VA 22046
USA

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YOUTH FESTIVAL IN TRINIDAD

MORE THAN 400 YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS from nine countries and territories participated in the 11th Caribbean Baptist Fellowship Youth Festival in the city of San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago, from July 19-23.

Held every three years, the festival included mission outreach events, training workshops and cultural presentations.

The 2017 theme was “I Stand for Jesus.”

Participants at the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship Youth Festival in San Fernando, Trinidad, share in various activities and events.
MEMORIAM

DOYLE PENNINGTON, former director of the Baptist World Alliance Men’s Department, died on August 13 in Stockbridge, Georgia, in the United States, after a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. He was 75 years old.

Pennington and wife, Celeste, were longtime leaders and participants in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) lay renewal movement. He was a cofounder of the SBC’s Lay Mission Service Corps (MSC) in 1977 and was its first volunteer.

MSC, a Peace Corps-style organization for laypeople to experience mission first hand, was a brainchild of former US President Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist. Among countries and regions to which he led mission endeavors were North Korea, Australia, American Samoa, and the North American Arctic.

Pennington helped organize Reconciliation ‘97, a worldwide Christian gathering in Coventry Cathedral in the United Kingdom, as well as YouthLink 2000, an event for students in seven cities linked globally by satellite to celebrate Christ at the turn of the new century.

He was director of the BWA Men’s Department from 1994-1996 and 2003-2010. He is a former member of the BWA Executive Committee and the Promotion and Development Committee.

Funeral service was held September 2 at New Hope Baptist Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina, USA.

He is survived by wife, Celeste; and daughters, Jennie and Amy.

VIOLET MOSSE-BROWN, a longstanding Baptist and the oldest verified living person in the world, died on September 15 in Montego Bay, Jamaica, after being diagnosed with dehydration and irregular heartbeat. She was 117 years old.

Mosse-Brown lived in the small community of Duanvale, Trelawny, in northern Jamaica, and was, for much of her life, a member of the Tritonville Baptist Church in her community.

Known lovingly as Aunt V, she was born March 10, 1900.

Regarded as Jamaica’s oldest person ever, her longevity brought attention to her small, rural community, drawing visits from Jamaica’s governor general, prime minister and the president of the Jamaica Baptist Union.

Baptized at the age of 13, she was a music teacher and church organist at Tritonville Baptist Church for more than 80 years.

After her husband’s death in 1997, she took over his responsibilities as record-keeper for the local cemetery, a job she continued well after her 100th birthday.

Mosse-Brown became the world’s oldest human on April 15 after the passing of Italian Emma Morano, who was born on November 29, 1899.

She is survived by four of her six children. Brown’s first child, Harland Fairweather, died on April 19 this year, at 97 years and 4 days. Up to the time of his passing he was believed to be the world’s oldest person with a living parent.

Books

_Journeying to Justice – Contribution to the Baptist Tradition across the Black Atlantic_ is a new book featuring contributions from a variety of scholars and practitioners who together explore Black Baptist relations between England and the Caribbean. It is the first comprehensive appraisal of the journey toward equity and reconciliation among British and Jamaican Baptists since the Baptist Union of Great Britain Apology for Slavery in 2007.

Ken Cadette, _Slaves, Soldiers and Saints: Baptist Witness in Trinidad 1816-2016_. A concise historical account of the birth and development of Baptists in Trinidad.
This will require a deliberate effort to challenge practices within our cultures and traditions that legitimize a behavior that undermines the dignity of female persons. These beliefs and practices are not only found in so called “Third World” countries, but are prevalent in the whole world. Sadly, some women allow themselves to be used in perpetrating such evil practices and the stereotyping of women. In politics we see women defending men who are misogynists. As an example, when the current South African president was charged with rape, the women’s league of the ruling party went to court to support the perpetrator rather than the victim, a young woman. This is but one example of many, which shows that this challenge is far from over.

At the root of these evil practices is the economy. Growing poverty in the world opens the door for slavery. Young girls are being sold into slavery because of hunger. Our communities are formed in such a way that women are the first to suffer when there are challenges and they are the last to benefit when the country prospers.

The words in the title of this article are taken from Luke 1:28, when the angel Gabriel visited Mary to tell her the greatest news ever: that she will give birth to the Messiah. This is a powerful affirmation of women in God’s kingdom. There was no other way that the Messiah could be born except to be carried for nine months in the body of a woman. If heaven did not struggle with the fact that the Savior of the world was to be carried by a female person, why should we struggle with the place of women in society? The angel Gabriel called Mary “blessed.” Christ came to liberate all humanity so that we are all blessed, women and men.

The reality is that even today the church and the world at large are still struggling with the status of women in society. In this modern age we still try to find reasons to treat women as lesser beings than men. So the struggle is not yet over.

I want to encourage us to rise up because a luta continua vitória é certa (The fight goes on, the victory is certain). Let us continue the struggle because with Christ on our side, victory is certain. Amen.

It is sad that the struggle for the total emancipation of female persons is far from over. We note with dismay that the rights and dignity of women are under serious threat. This struggle has been going on for centuries, but we should not give up.
How to Give

PRAY DAILY
bwanet.org/resources/baptists-in-prayer

STAY CONNECTED
BWA newsletters, mobile app,
@TheBWA, the_BWA (Instagram)
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