Baptist WORLD
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Baptists in North America Take United Stand

Celebrate BWA Day this May!

BWA nominates new General Secretary - see page 26
Irmgard Claas (on left above), widow of former Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Gerhard Claas, was a special guest at the ‘Thanks Lotz’ banquet held on March 3 where she brought greetings to Denton and Janice Lotz. Irmgard also participated in a number of sessions with BWA leaders and department and commission members during the BWA’s Executive committee meetings at the BWA headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia.

Members of the BWA family were happy to see Irmgard, whose husband died tragically in 1988 in a motor vehicle accident in California in the United States. Gerhard Claas was General Secretary from 1980 until his untimely death.

Irmgard’s daughter, Regina, is a former staff member of the BWA, and is now the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany. Regina chairs the Freedom and Justice Commission of the BWA and was a major participant in the various meetings held March 5-7.
19 Baptist Volunteers to Build Houses
Hundreds of Baptists volunteers are being gathered to show the love of Christ by building houses for those affected by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina.

20 North American Baptists Honor Lotz
Over 750 persons participated in a North American “Thanks Lotz” tribute to honor retiring BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz and his wife Janice.

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23 Frank Adams Laid to Rest
Participants from throughout Africa and overseas gathered in Ghana for memorial services for Frank Adams, former BWA Regional Secretary for Africa.

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26 Baptist World Alliance Nominates Jamaican as New General Secretary
Jamaican Neville Callam has been nominated to succeed Denton Lotz as General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance upon Lotz’ retirement in 2007.

29 Youth Prepare for 2008 Conference in Germany
“The world coming together” – that’s the Baptist World Youth Conference, held every five years. Under the theme ‘Dive Deeper,’ youth will be encouraged to dive deeper in commitment to Christ, in the study of God’s Word, in missions, and in fellowship.
I can summarize my ministry for the month of January as three weeks, ten flights, ten beds, and twelve sermons! Janet and I were guests of the Baptists of Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil and we were not only ‘hugged out’ with Latin American hospitality, but deeply inspired and challenged by the mission vibrancy of these three conventions.

In Guayaquil, Ecuador, we heard the testimony of Maria Valez. Born in Columbia, she had found her way as a young teenager to Ecuador where she was trapped in a life of prostitution and drugs. This was her dangerous lifestyle for many years until a group of Christians with a street ministry to reach prostitutes introduced her to Jesus Christ. Maria told us: “Jesus filled the emptiness of my heart and changed my life completely. Now I can pray as David did in Psalm 51: ‘Have mercy on me God; according to your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.’” Maria is now involved in the same street ministry (Jesus the Way Out) that first found and rescued her.

When we landed in Lima, Peru, we heard of the new ministry among the 500 children that are the PK’s (preachers’ kids) of the Peru Convention. There has been a concern in recent years at the numbers of PK’s who have walked away from the life of the church saying “My Dad loved his church more than he loved me” and “The church has stolen my Dad.” This concern for the families of church leaders prompted a program of summer camps designed specifically for pastors’ children and there has been an evident fruitfulness in a short time. My interpreter at one of the services was a former ‘manse rebel’; he is now in his early 20’s and studying at the seminary in Lima.

Our final visit was to Brazil and the beautiful coastal city of Florianópolis, which was the venue for the annual meetings of the Baptist Convention of Brazil. The International Mission Board of the Brazilian Convention supports over 600 missionaries in 68 countries and their Radical Missions project has been a phenomenal success among young Brazilian Baptists. In most places in the world Brazilians are welcomed with open arms – not least because of their reputation of friendship and the legendary achievements of Brazil in the World Cup! The General Director of the Board, Waldemiro Tymchak, calls this the “Burden of global likeability,” and suggests that Brazilian Baptists should use this to the greatest advantage for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. It is not every nation that can say it carries “the burden of likeability.”

In Quito, Ecuador, I attended a breakfast meeting with a group of church leaders representing different denominations, as well as leaders from some of the leading evangelical para-church agencies working in Ecuador. All the leaders expressed a pastoral concern about the independent mega-church movement which is mushrooming in many parts of Latin America.

“The problem with some of the newer churches,” observed a veteran leader of many years, “is they are too independent and they have no theology of the ancient tree trunk. They think Jesus was born in their backyard and the Kingdom of God began with them. They have no idea they are a branch of a tree in an ancient trunk. This trunk represents the wisdom and experience of God’s people through the years.”

This amnesia regarding the ancient trunk is a very secular attitude. Tom Oden is accurate when he says modern society is xenophobic toward the past. It adores today, it worships tomorrow and it loathes antiquity. Christians can be prone to this attitude and we need to guard against a shallow approach to reading church history. Rowan Williams widens the benefits of studying the past when he says “It is not only good for the health of the Church: it is a seriously needed contribution to the intellectual and emotional wellbeing of the culture” (Why study the Past? Darton Longman Todd 2205).

Similarly, we impoverish our own ministries by making very narrow choices when it comes to friendship and partnership in the family of God Joel Carpenter in his contribution to an excellent volume of essays in the Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail (edited by Timothy George, published by Baker Academic 2004), says “There is a wideness in God’s mercy that we are not fully appreciating and a fellowship we are not enjoying and founts of wisdom from which we are not drinking.”

For the sake of God’s Mission in the world, let us be more generous in our friendships.

As the wisdom from the ancient tree says, if your heart is right with my heart, then give me your hand.
A group of radical Muslims attacked a Baptist church in the city of Bandung, approximately 112 miles southeast of the Indonesian capital of Jakarta.

The incident, which happened on Sunday, February 25, traumatized approximately 200 children in Sunday School who fled the scene. Much of the church property, including contents, was destroyed. No one was reported to be physically hurt.

According to Guntur Subagyo, General Secretary of the Union of Indonesian Baptist Churches, the union has contacted the authorities and is in talks with Danny Setiawan, governor for West Java, the province for which Bandung is the capital.

Indonesia, the fourth most populous country in the world with more than 222 million people, has a majority Muslim population of over 90 percent.

There are three Baptist conventions in Indonesia that are member bodies of the BWA with a total of almost 550 churches and more than 130,000 members.

Baptist groups in Indonesia have responded to flooding that occurred in the Asian country in early February. At least 31 people have died and almost 300,000 have been displaced as a result of the flooding.

The West Java Baptist Association assisted 1,000 evacuees while congregations in East, West and South Java provided shelter, food, rescue and other forms of assistance for several hundred more. The Lampung Baptist Association on the island of Sumatra has also been mobilized.

Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance, sent an initial donation of $10,000 to assist with the relief effort.

Baptist persons and institutions were not spared. The Jakarta Seminary and Baptist Book Store in were flooded out with the water reaching as high as four feet, damaging books, computers, and other items. Victor Rembeth, former General Secretary of the Union of Indonesian Baptist Churches and a relief coordinator, reported, “There are many stories of how Baptists, despite being affected badly by the flooding, helped their fellow human beings in the affected areas.”

The flooding, which occurred in the first week in February, affected the capital Jakarta, Bekasi, Tangerang and other areas.

Armenia is regarded as the world’s oldest Christian nation having become officially a Christian nation in 301 AD. The majority of the country’s three million people are part of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The first Baptist congregations were established at the beginning of the 18th century.

In the early 20th century, a series of traumatic events struck a severe blow to the growing Baptist movement. The Christian faith was severely undermined by genocide and Soviet communism.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union and the demise of communism, Baptist work is growing. In 1990 there were only four Baptist churches with a total membership of 350. Five years later this number doubled, and by 1998 there were 1,100 Baptists. In 2002 the statistics registered about 2,500 members in nearly 100 churches and church plants. The number grew to 3,800 members in 137 congregations in 2006.

The first Baptist church was planted in Azerbaijan in 1890 in the capital city of Baku and registered in 1905 when the first Baptist church building was erected. It served Baptists for about 40 years but was confiscated in 1946 and turned into a cinema. Today, there are 22 churches with total membership of 3,000.

Despite instances of persecution, such as the loss of jobs due to one’s faith, the church is growing. Baptisms are often performed secretly and pastors of growing churches are sometimes threatened in the predominantly Muslim country. Most congregations meet in homes and are engaged in social ministry to the homeless, orphans and immigrants.
Baptists Celebrate Centennial

The Baptist Convention of Brazil celebrated its 100th anniversary during its 2007 Assembly in Florianópolis, January 23 to 30. Almost 1,900 messengers registered with evening services averaging 4,000 in attendance.

The convention, the largest Baptist World Alliance (BWA) member body in Latin America with more than one million members and approximately 6,500 churches, was formed in 1907 after the first Baptist church was founded in 1871 in Sao Paulo.

The new president, Oliveira de Araújo, is senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Vitoria, and served as president of the Home Mission Board between 1984 and 1992.

BWA President David Coffey gave the keynote address on Saturday, January 27. Fausto Vasconcelos, BWA Director for Evangelism and Education and Study & Research, and former eight-time president of the Brazilian convention, participated in the week-long meetings.

BWA Director for Evangelism & Education and Study & Research
Fausto Vasconcelos translates for BWA President David Coffey at the Brazilian Baptist Assembly in January

Georgia

Cradle of the Baptist Movement in the Caucasus

The first Baptist church in Georgia was founded in 1867 in the capital Tbilisi, considered one of the cradles of the Baptist movement in the Caucasus. Christianity reached the country in 326 AD with the majority, 85 percent, being members of the Orthodox Church. Religious minorities, such as Baptists, suffer discrimination, including physical attacks.

At the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there were only 10 Baptist churches in Georgia, with a total membership of 2,000. In 2006 there were 75 Baptist congregations with 5,080 members.

The Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia has developed several thriving projects, such as the ‘School of Elijah,’ a three-year education program aimed at preparing ministers, Sunday school teachers and missionaries. The new Baptist Center, ‘Beteli,’ was dedicated in 2005 and provides space for a Baptist seminary and conference center, as well as a care home.

Zimbabwe

Pastors Arrested

Nine pastors, at least one of them Baptist, were arrested in Zimbabwe in late January.

Rev. Raymond Motsi, pastor of the Bulawayo Baptist Church, was among a group of more than 300 pastors and church leaders who were attending a leadership seminar when the meeting was broken up by police and the nine arrested. Those arrested have since been released on bail of Z$100,000 each.

Under Zimbabwe’s Public Order and Security Act, it is an offence to gather in
The Holy Trinity Baptist Church in the city of Lipetsk, approximately 300 miles south east of Moscow, is threatened with closure. The membership has, however, defied the order handed down by government officials.

According to Forum 18, an Oslo, Norway-based religious news service, the church’s problems began in November of 2006 when police first demanded that the building be vacated and closed down. In late January, the local construction inspectorate imposed a fine of 10,000 roubles or US$380 and warned that the building would be closed down if not declared fit for use by February 22.

The building, which is still under construction, is being used by the approximately 200 members, even though it has no gas, electricity or running water. But the pastor of the congregation, Vladimir Boyev, insisted that this is neither unique nor unusual, as many Orthodox churches in the Lipetsk region do not meet the standards demanded of the Baptist church, “But no one shuts them down.”

Boyev, in giving his reasons why the construction is not yet complete, stated that just doing the gas installation alone costs four million roubles or US$152,600. “It is all very expensive for us and so we are doing it gradually.” He elaborated, “We’re not a commercial organization – our students and pensioners can’t afford it.”

Members of the church – which is affiliated to the Union of Evangelical Churches Baptist of the Russian Federation, a member body of the Baptist World Alliance – carry their own water supplies to the building.

Holy Trinity, which previously met in a building owned by the Russian Orthodox Church, explained why the Baptists want their own building. “We want a replacement. We’re not asking for something with golden domes or of a western standard, but what the authorities have offered us so far (at the Orthodox Church) is in a very bad state,” explained Boyev.
A Baptist pastor was murdered in his church in South Africa.

Philip Mokson, pastor at Masiphumelele, was tragically shot and killed on January 22. A young woman was also critically injured during the incident. The shooter took his own life.

After the planting of the Masiphumelele church by the Fish Hoek Baptist Church, Mokson took on the challenge of being pastor in the impoverished Eastern Cape community. He helped pioneer the charity, Living Hope, and was one of its board members at the time of his death. Living Hope is involved in the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS, as well as community development through education, skills development and health-related programs.

Wendy Ryan, former Communications Director with the Baptist World Alliance who now works with Living Hope, and who is a member of the Masiphumelele Baptist Church where the shooting occurred, described the incident as devastating. “People from all over the world knew pastor Mokson and his work with HIV/AIDS.” Mokson was “A shining light in a depressed community still trying to come to terms with the effects of apartheid and HIV/AIDS,” Ryan said.

Tony W. Cartledge, in a March 23, 2005 article in the Biblical Recorder, the newspaper for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina in the United States, described his visit to the Eastern Cape community and his meeting with Mokson. “He is regarded as a leader of the community, almost like a tribal chief, held in high regard.” Noting Mokson’s work as a peacemaker in the volatile area, Cartledge claimed that singer/songwriter Stephen Curtis Chapman met Mokson and recorded a song about him. Chapman, he said, sings of Mokson as a ‘man of peace.’

Cartledge related an incident in which Mokson placed his life on the line to save a family. Ryan also described his peacemaking role, often intervening in conflicts between Somali refugee businessmen and local businesses.

Mokson, who was 65, is survived by his wife, Mina, and their children and grandchildren.

The sixth floor of the Gaza Baptist Church in Palestine was used by police of the Palestinian Authority as a lookout point in early February.

The newly constructed building, which was dedicated in November last year, sits close to the main police station in Gaza, and is regarded as giving the best vantage point to observe militia activities on the ground.

Hanna Massad, pastor of Gaza Baptist Church, fears that the building and all who are in it will be in danger if the police were to engage militias in gunfire. The sixth floor is used as the sanctuary for worship while other floors are used for outreach ministries by the church, including a women’s clinic on the third floor.

In urging the world to remember Gaza, Massad asked that there be prayer that God protect the believers and the building; that the believers will experience the peace of God; that there will be no gunfire around the church building; and that the conflict in Palestine, and Gaza in particular, will come to an end.

Massad reports that the current situation is “The worst situation we have ever gone through in Gaza, even more dangerous than the Israeli invasion of Gaza.”

The audience at the dedication of the new Gaza Baptist Church building in November last year.

The Sri Lanka government should do all within its power to stop abductions and harassment of civilians, said Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary Denton Lotz, who made his appeal directly to Sri Lankan President, Mahindra Rajapakse.

Lotz issued his call after the abduction of four Christians on March 2 in the predominantly Buddhist country. Victor Yogarajan, 51, a pastor from Vanuïya, was kidnapped on March 8 along with his two sons, Daniel, 22, and David, 20, and Joseph Suganthakumar, 20. Vanuïya is a front line northern town in the ongoing war between the Sri Lankan Army and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as the Tamil Tigers.

“It has become increasingly clear that this is not an isolated incident, but part of a trend of disappearances and abductions of civilians,” Lotz claimed in his March 13 letter to the head of state of the South Asia...
island nation, located less than 20 miles off the southern coast of India.

“This is indeed a shocking trend for any nation, particularly for a democratic nation such as Sri Lanka with an elected government. In this situation the paramount responsibility to arrest this trend and bring to book anyone who engages in abductions or extra judicial killings falls on the Sri Lankan Government,” Lotz said.

The four were abducted while en route to a bus stop in Negombo, a town on the Indian Ocean in the western region of Sri Lanka, approximately 20 miles north of the capital Colombo.

Sri Lanka has been dogged by a series of kidnappings. An Asian Human Rights Commission report indicates that a disappearance occurs in Sri Lanka every five hours.

The Civil Monitoring Committee, based in Colombo, and formed in 2006 to monitor extra judicial killings, claims to have received almost 100 complaints of disappearances from Colombo and other areas since the committee’s founding.

In light of this, Lotz called on President Rajapakse to take urgent “Action to ensure all Sri Lankan citizens their basic security and freedom from fear of abductions, through adherence to proper legal procedures governed by the Rule of Law.”

The country is 80 percent Buddhist. Just fewer than 1.5 million claim to be Christian in Sri Lanka, approximately seven percent of the population of more than 20 million in the former British colony, which gained independence in 1948.

The Sri Lanka Baptist Union, a member body of the BWA, has 22 churches and over 4,011 members.

Leena Lavanya of India and her SERVE TRUST Ministries received the Mahatma Gandhi Award for “The most effective non-Governmental Organization for the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh for her work with the poor and destitute in society.”

Lavanya, who is a member of the Freedom and Justice Study Commission and the Mission and Evangelism Workgroup of the Baptist World Alliance, also received a Rotary award as Outstanding Woman President. She works among the poorest people in Indian society and runs ministries for prostitutes and their children, HIV/AIDS patients and orphans, as well as schools for uneducated and unskilled young women, a ministry of church planting, and others.

Baptist pastors in southern Poland participated in ecumenical services sharing prayer, testimonies, greetings and the reading of scripture with other denominations. Services were held at Central Baptist Church in Katowice on January 24. The mayor of the city and clergy from other churches participated.

Participating churches included the Lutheran Church, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church and Seminary, as well as the Polish National Church.
Dorothy Selebano of South Africa, president of the Baptist World Alliance Women’s Department, participated in women’s conferences in the Czech Republic, Romania and Latvia in October 2006.

Selebano was the main speaker at the European Baptist Women’s Union’s (EBWU) conference held in Prague, Czech Republic for women’s leaders in Western Europe. Sixty-two women from 15 countries took part in the conference with the theme ‘Trust in the Lord and do good.’ Participants were able to share their burdens and joys concerning ministry in their own countries. A common concern for the leaders is how to involve and encourage the younger generation of women. The delegates at the conference prayed together for God’s solutions. The women also shared details of their involvement in ministry in countries in Africa, Asia and throughout Europe, particularly to women and children, single mothers, and victims of violence in the family.

Following the Prague conference, Selebano and Ewa Gutowska, president of EBWU, traveled to Romania for a conference sponsored by the Hungarian Baptist Women of Romania. One hundred and fifty people from as far as 60 miles away came to the Loco Satu Mare Hungarian-speaking Baptist Church where Selebano spoke. She told those gathered, “I am like an envelope in which there is a message. The message comes from God and speaks of God’s love.” The following day over 250 women from local churches came together for a service.

While in Romania, Selebano visited the office of the Hungarian Baptist Convention of Romania and met with the leaders of the women’s department. She also spoke at the 3rd Roma Baptist Women’s Conference in the largest Roma (Gypsy) church belonging to the Hungarian Baptist Convention of Romania. One hundred and sixty women from eight churches participated.

From Romania, Selebano spent two days in Latvia, where she preached and led workshops for women’s leaders of the Latvian Baptist Women’s Union.

Mozambique

Heavy rains that fell for several weeks in early 2006 in southern Africa caused the Zambezi River to break its banks, flooding the central region of Mozambique.

The floods have displaced people and animals and destroyed homes and crops. The government declared a state of emergency and estimates that 300,000 to 500,000 people are affected by the floods. Over 140,000 Mozambicans have been forced to leave their homes and at least 40 have been killed.

Cyclone Favio, the largest ever to hit Mozambique, made landfall on February 22, bringing further devastation to the flood-ravaged country. The flooding became more severe in the central region on February 25 when the Buzi River overflowed because of rains from the storm.

Displaced persons are in desperate need of shelter, food and water. The Baptist Convention of Mozambique is providing maize flour, cooking oil, beans and salt to around 2,600 families in and around the Caia District, using one of the local churches as a distribution point.

Baptist World Aid sent an initial contribution of $5,000 to support the convention’s relief efforts.
The Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) dedicated its J$56 million (US$850,000) headquarters on Saturday, February 24. The building, which was funded from internal revenue and the sale price of the previous headquarters building, has been occupied by the union since July 2006.

A decision was made back in 2001 to move from heavily congested Half Way Tree, the busiest segment of the capital city of Kingston, to a spacious property owned by the Baptists in another part of the capital for almost a century.

The JBU Centre includes the executive and administrative offices, the mission center, small conference facilities, a recording studio, as well as the bookstore. It sits close to two other major Baptist institutions, Calabar High School, one of the island’s premier schools for boys founded in 1912, and Boulevard Baptist Church, one of the largest Baptist buildings and congregations in the country.

Among special guests at the event were the Mayor of Kingston, Desmond McKenzie, who brought greetings, and Lesley Anderson, president of the United Theological College of the West Indies, who was the keynote speaker at the dedication ceremony, as well as leaders of other church communions.

The dedication took place during the 157th General Assembly of the JBU which ran February 21-25.

(Below): Lisa Henlin, wife of Jamaica Baptist Union President Karl Henlin, along with young Baptist member Jo-Anna Hemmings, cuts the ribbon to officially open the new JBU Centre (pictured at bottom).
Lebanon

Christians Reach Out
a Helping Hand

The Lebanese Society for Educational & Social Development (LSESD) is involved in relief work in Sudan and Iraq.

“Words cannot describe the level of poverty in Sudan,” says Nabil Costa, director of LSESD. “For two consecutive years, the Lebanese Society for Educational & Social Development has felt the need to reach out with a gesture of love to hundreds of Sudanese who are amongst the very poor in the country. These are people who live miles from nowhere, yet whose lives are being touched by the Word of God in miraculous ways.”

An LSESD team and local volunteers distributed 1,600 blankets and 700 food parcels to needy and displaced people in Sudan in December of 2006. The team purchased the items at markets in Libya and then used churches in Sudan as sorting and distribution centers.

Recipients of the parcels included orphanages, churches, street youth and other individuals. Prisoners were also beneficiaries of the LSESD relief project. Prison conditions are harsh, and children and babies must live with their imprisoned mothers who have no source of income or food. LSESD distributed milk packets to the mothers and children.

LSESD also seeks to “Strengthen the ministry in Iraq through revealing Christ’s ‘practical’ love.” Local volunteers and churches have distributed 339 food parcels to needy persons in Iraq. Many more relief items were purchased by LSESD, but are not yet distributed because of the dangerous security situation. LSESD also plans to provide Christian tapes, but because of the hijacking of trucks carrying goods to Iraq, the shipment was delayed.

Through the relief projects in Sudan and Iraq, LSESD helps needy persons as well as strengthening the local churches that minister daily in difficult circumstances.

Baptists Appeal
for Prayer

Events in Lebanon highlight the tenuous security situation in the conflict-torn country. On February 13, two bomb explosions on buses killed three people near the capital city of Beirut. Tensions were high between pro- and anti-government factions during the February 14th political rally held to commemorate the second anniversary of the death of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, further demonstrating the deteriorating political situation.

Nabil Costa, a Baptist leader who is Executive Director of the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development, appeals for prayer during this “Critical time” in Lebanon. “We pray to a God who does miracles,” says Costa, “And as the tension continues to build up in our country, we are in desperate need for a miracle.”

In a January 25 update, Costa described violence taking place in the vicinity of the Beirut Baptist School. Some students were trapped at the school, unable to leave because of shooting in the streets. “Watching today’s clashes on the television brings to mind the civil war that Lebanon labored under for almost two decades. God forbid that we are heading in that direction again,” wrote Costa.

Lebanon experienced civil war from 1975-1989 and in 2006 suffered a 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah forces in Lebanon. Costa and Lebanese Baptists were active in providing support and relief to displaced persons during the recent conflict, 90 percent of whom were non-Christians.

In the face of the current escalating political crisis, Costa seeks prayer “That God may intervene and calm the spirits of the two main conflicting groups – those affiliated to the government as well as its opponents” and “That the Body of Christ in Lebanon refrains from taking sides but maintains its focus on the Lord and seeks amidst this difficult time to bring about a spirit of reconciliation and peacemaking.”

He is confident that “Our God is able! He has delivered us before and He certainly will this time too.”

Sudan

International news is littered with devastating reports from Sudan. The destruction is not just limited to violence as a breakdown in a country’s infrastructure leaves citizens vulnerable to other disasters as well. Most recently, a meningitis outbreak in Southern Sudan threatened the lives of hundreds of thousands.

BWAid’s Rescue24, under the direction of Hungarian Baptist Aid, was called upon to help vaccinate and thus help prevent the spread of the epidemic. Baptist World Aid responded by sending US$10,000 to help with the cost of preventative healthcare in Sudan.

With the precarious political situation, Rescue24 opted to utilize the pre-existing network of ‘Make Way Partners,’ a Christian organization that was recommended by a BWAid Committee member, as it has ongoing grassroots operations in Sudan. A relief team consisting of doctors, paramedics and general relief workers was on the ground from February 27 to March 5.
The team was able to treat over 700 patients with myriad ailments and diseases as well as administer vaccines.

The diary of team leader László Pavelcze sheds light on the situation: “When we arrived to the first site, more than 50 people were waiting for us. It was very difficult to express our feelings seeing the suffering of children and adults. In this country Mother Teresa’s saying is so meaningful: ‘Our work is a drop in the sea. But drops make up the sea.’”

One doctor and two nurses remain in the area that the team visited in order to continue the medical work, including administering newly-arrived vaccines. Pavelcze states: “The fact – the outside world does not talk about – is that as many people die here in one day as anywhere else in the case of a natural disaster. Avoiding epidemic is possible only with professional and quick intervention.”

BWAid has other projects that add drops to the sea through BWA Sudanese member bodies.

(Above): A baptism in a river in March during the BWAid Rescue24 medical team visit to Sudan

(Left): A BWAid Rescue24/HBAid medical staff member vaccinates a Sudanese child.

(Facing page): BWAid/HBAid doctors attend to the head wound of a Sudanese boy who fell from a tree.
By J. Bryson Arthur
Association of Baptist Churches in Israel

Baptist World Alliance President David Coffey took part in a pilgrimage to Bethlehem and Jerusalem in December along with the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Primate of the Armenian Orthodox Church, Nathan Novhannesian. All four serve as presidents of the ecumenical group, Churches Together in England (CTE). The following is a report from Bryson Arthur, a leader of the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel.

Fuad Haddad, the Chairman of the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel, and I waited furtively in the rather salubrious reception area of the Notre Dame church in Israel during a pilgrimage in December last year. The party of visiting church leaders had been delayed because of fog at Heathrow airport and they were around two hours late. We wondered if we were at the right place as there seemed to be no one there apart from ourselves. Suddenly, without warning, the Scout pipe band struck up with the large drum beating and there were people everywhere. The august party had arrived in two coaches, and dignitaries, some in robes and tall hats, sprung from every corner.

Before I knew what was happening, I was shaking hands with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of Westminster. David Coffey, on this occasion representing the “free churches” of Britain, somehow had managed to slip in through the flanks. We milled through the crowd to where he was and he, along with Graham Sparks, was so delighted to see us and greeted us so warmly and courteously that our long wait became worthwhile. We continued to have discussion until David was whisked away to begin the series of meetings and rituals that make up the content of such receptions.

It was somewhat striking to me that alongside the great and high in their robes and grand medallions and crosses, one man, in a humble lounge suit and clerical shirt, spoke with equal moment. I can’t stress enough the importance of David’s visit on this occasion, and of this nature, to the evangelical Christian churches in Israel. To have a prominent Baptist leader present at such an auspicious occasion was a source of real encouragement for all the evangelical churches, especially the Baptist churches. Just before the meal, served at one very long table, David was again whisked away to further meetings. He turned to me and said: “Bryson, can I leave my coat with you?” And I found myself the keeper of the coat; but for quite a different purpose from Paul’s holding of the cloaks at the martyrdom of Stephen.

We look forward very much to David’s next visit to Israel in September 2007 when we evangelicals look forward to continuing meaningful discussion and fellowship with him.

Cameroon

Baptists Caught Up in Conflict

Approximately 240 houses were burned and over 1,200 persons left homeless, among them 50 Baptist families, in the West African country of Cameroon.

The incident is part of a broader conflict between the Oku and Mbessa people in the Northwest Province of the country. The conflict came to a head in mid-February when more than 50 persons were wounded in a skirmish between the two tribes. Twenty four Oku were wounded while there were 30 Mbessa casualties.

Peter Ngong, Baptist pastor and Director of Media for the local Baptist association, reported that “The whole Province is worried as children cannot go to school. Property worth over 450 million CFA francs (US$913,000) has been destroyed.”

Ngong, a former member of the communications committee of the Baptist World Alliance, who is Mbessa, reported being “Shocked by what I saw” on his visit to his hometown, which also bears the name of the tribe, Mbessa. Ngong is based in the Northwest Province capital of Bamenda, a city of almost 330,000 people. His aunt, who has been a widow for eight years, lost her house during the arson attacks, leaving her homeless with 14 children and eight grandchildren, Ngong said. The Baptist church in the community was left unharmed.

The latest incidents were sparked after two Oku women attempted to plant crops on disputed lands. After being arrested, beaten and released, members of the Oku tribe retaliated by attacking two Mbessa guards, leaving them with gunshot wounds. The conflict broadened to include the skirmish and arson attacks. All the houses destroyed belong to the Mbessa tribe.

The area of the conflict, which is very mountainous and close to the Nigerian border, is characterized by subsistence farming. There is a shortage of arable land and the people farm even the steep hillsides.

An uneasy calm has since returned to the region after government security forces were sent to the area.

(Above): BWA President David Coffey with other leaders from the British ecumenical group Churches Together along with leaders of the church in Israel during a pilgrimage in December last year.
A major convocation of Baptists is planned for the United States in early 2008.

Thirty six groups that comprise the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF) in Canada and the United States, along with other Baptist groups from North America, will convene the ‘Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant’, tentatively set for January 30 to February 1 at the World Congress Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Over 20,000 participants are expected to attend.

The plans were announced at a press conference on January 9 after a meeting of almost 80 Baptist leaders at the Carter Center in Atlanta.

William Underwood, president of the Baptist-affiliated Mercer University in Georgia, who along with former US president Jimmy Carter conceptualized the idea of a Baptist covenant, declared that it brings together “Baptists of a broad spectrum – North and South, African American and Anglo-American, conservatives, moderates and progressives.”

The covenant is drawn from Luke 4:18-19, and the convocation will focus on unity, respect for diversity, healing the sick, welcoming the stranger, in addition to

(Continued on page 17)
NABF HONORS LEADERS

Ruby Burke, former Executive Assistant to Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary Denton Lotz who retired in 2006, received a special award from the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF) for her 15 years service as Recording Secretary to the NABF.

Canadian Harry Gardner, who served as NABF President for four years until 2006, was also awarded for his work in reviving the regional fellowship, one of six continental federations of the BWA.

The presentations were made by former US President Jimmy Carter at the Carter Center in Atlanta during the annual meetings of the NABF executive. The meetings included the announcement of plans for a ‘New Baptist Covenant’ and a major convocation in January 2008.
other themes. Sessions will address issues such as racism, poverty, HIV/AIDS, stewardship of material resources, recovery of spiritual roots, religious liberty, faith and public policy, among others.

NABF president David Goatley, who heads the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention in the US, declared, “The wind of the Holy Spirit is blowing among Baptists in North America.” In recognizing the historic nature of the planned celebration, Goatley said, “An effort of this magnitude has not been tried before... By God's grace we will succeed in facilitating a missional movement among Baptists with the poor that may revolutionize lives and churches.”

General Secretary Alan Stanford regards it as a tremendous opportunity for North American Baptists to work together. “This is just the starting point,” said Stanford, “and I look forward to further collaborative efforts between the various North American groups.”

Charles Wade, Executive Director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, in calling for prayer, declared, “This is a chance to heal the racial wounds that have existed for the past 150 to 200 years. Canada and the US need to hear from us. It is an opportunity to express to our congregations what the heart of the gospel is.”

William Shaw, President of National Baptist Convention, USA, the largest African American group on the continent with more than eight million members, said the celebration will “Bring Baptists together without being partisan, but no less prophetic.”

All the major African American Baptist conventions will participate, along with other groups such as American Baptist Churches, USA, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Canadian Baptist Ministries. The NABF represents more than 20 million members.

Even though former US presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, Baptist laymen, lend key support to the initiative, participants were careful to note that it is neither partisan nor political, Democrat or Republican. Another Baptist layman, Lindsey Graham, Republican Senator from South Carolina, will participate.

Mercer University's Underwood said the convocation will be an attempt “To provide a new, authentic, prophetic Baptist voice.” It is “The power of more than 20 million Baptists working together to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and provide justice for the poor,” he said.

"Bringing together Baptists of a broad spectrum – North and South, African American and Anglo-American, conservatives, moderates and progressives.”

Participants in the NABF meetings include Ashley McNeil of Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention (above left), and Houmphanh Vongsurith of Laotian National Baptist Fellowship (above, far right).

(Right): Baptist General Association of Virginia Executive Director John Upton, NABF General Secretary Alan Stanford, and Canadian Baptist Ministries General Secretary Gary Nelson, enjoy a laugh between meetings.
A new Christendom, originating from the Two Thirds World, is rising to take the place of the old.

This is the conclusion drawn by George Bullard, church consultant and former executive director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Bullard spoke at the executive committee meeting of the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF) in Atlanta in January.

“The next Christendom will not be organized in a centralized or decentralized way, but in a distributive way,” Bullard said. There are other characteristics of the new phenomenon. More and more will be done through congregations than through denominational structures, including ordaining pastors and other leaders directly out of congregations. These developments, among others, may lead to the questioning of the existence of denominational organizations themselves, as there may be the view that much that is done through these denominational centers can be done better through the local church.

There will be greater fragmentation. Among the factors pulling in this direction include the freer, expressive worship that characterizes Two Thirds World Christians as against their contemporaries in the north. Healings, exorcism, and spiritual warfare will gain greater prominence. There will be more emphasis on holiness, spiritual development, and prayer.

Baptists from the southern hemisphere are mission-focused and do not, for the most part, see a dichotomy between social action and spirituality. According to Bullard, “Evangelism and social ministry will not be divided. They will be one, seamless in their execution, and indivisible conceptually. Caring for the whole person will be the hallmark of congregational ministry. A driving force will be life transformation and its implications for community transformation.”

Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary Denton Lotz, in an invited response, concurred with Bullard. Lotz noted the shift in the demographic of Christians. Whereas 85 percent of all Christians were in Europe and North America in 1905, the number of Christians changed dramatically to more than 60 percent in the Two Thirds World by 2005.

“North America faces the challenge of doctrine,” Lotz asserted. The BWA leader, who retires at the end of 2007, noted that “There is a challenge between the heart and the head,” between authentic belief and action. This new tension is what faces old Christendom as the new Christendom rises.

The NABF, which unites most of the major Baptist conventions and unions in North America, has 36 member bodies representing more than 20 million baptized believers.

**Evangelism and social ministry will not be divided.**
At least 325 volunteers are being gathered by Baptist Builders, an initiative that brings together several Baptist groups to address poverty issues connected with Hurricanes Rita and Katrina.

Approximately five million Baptists in the United States are represented through the partnership between the American Baptist Churches in the USA, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Alliance of Baptists, and District of Columbia Baptist Convention.

Baptist World Aid is also participating in the building project with the hopes of involving not only Baptists from the United States, but also from the international Baptist community. Canadian Baptist Ministries is also actively involved in the project.

Coined a “Baptist Blitz”, the 12 houses will be constructed with the support of Habitat for Humanity’s Greater Baton Rouge affiliate in Louisiana.

By working together, Baptists will be able to show the love of Christ by helping 12 more families have simple, decent places to live.

More information on the project can be obtained by contacting Baptist World Aid at: bwaid@bwanet.org.

Baptist Volunteers to Build Houses
Over 750 persons, including a 150 voice choir, participated in the ‘Thanks Lotz’ tribute at the Hilton hotel in Tyson’s Corner in Virginia on Saturday, March 3.

Family and friends from as far away as Europe and Australia paid tribute to Denton Lotz, who retires as General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance at the end of 2007, and his wife Janice, a strong supporter of her husband and the BWA throughout the years.

Lotz, who was elected General Secretary in 1988 after the tragic passing of General Secretary Gerhard Claas who died in a motor vehicle accident in California, was lauded for his outstanding work in leading the organization that has grown to more than 200 member bodies with more than 36 million baptized members and a community of 110 million.

The ‘Denton Lotz Human Rights Award’ was launched, endowed with $100,000, to recognize individuals who have played a significant role in human rights and religious freedom in different parts of the world. The award will be given at the Annual Gathering held in July of each year.

There was a video tribute from former United States President Jimmy Carter, as well as a live tribute from Anne Graham-Lotz, daughter of Evangelist Billy Graham and sister-in-law of Denton, who also read a written tribute on behalf of her father. A ‘This is your life’ presentation was made of Denton’s life and ministry, which included his time in the military; his years as a student at the University of North Carolina, Harvard Divinity School, and the University of Hamburg in Germany; his time as a missionary in Central and Eastern Europe; and his early days at the BWA when he was Youth Department Director and then Director of Evangelism and Education.

Banquet guests were taken on a photo journey through Lotz’s years as General Secretary, including meetings with Cuban president Fidel Castro, which led to the distribution of Bibles in the communist country, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, former US President George H.W. Bush, President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya, Lech Aleksander Kaczyński, president of Poland, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines, as well as Lebanon Prime Minister Rafik Baha ad-Din Hariri, who was assassinated in 2005, among other world and church leaders.

President Carter, in his tribute, commended Lotz’s work to overcome poverty and oppression and his work on behalf
Theo Angelov of Bulgaria, former general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, spoke of the “Miracle” of the survival of the church in Eastern Europe. “I would like to stress the very important role the BWA played in Eastern Europe” during and after the communist era, Angelov emphasized. Stating that “Denton Lotz was the best ambassador,” Angelov recalled visits that the outgoing General Secretary made to Romania and elsewhere that have aided in the survival of the church in that part of the world today.

Knud Wümpelmann, a Dane who served as BWA president from 1990 to 1995, recalled the visits made to South Africa and the role the BWA played in the historic election in that country that elected Nelson Mandela to the presidency. Billy Kim, who was BWA president between 2000 and 2005, spoke of the leadership of Denton Lotz of the 1990 Seoul, South Korea World Congress and the tremendous impact it had on that country, including the baptism of 10,000 people during the meetings.

The banquet, which preceded the annual meetings of the executive committee of the BWA at its office in Falls Church, Virginia, was dubbed a North American Celebration, and was the first of what is expected to be several events to be held throughout the world this year to honor Denton Lotz for his 19 years as the Chief Executive Officer of the worldwide body.
In Memoriam

**John Merritt**

John Merritt, General Secretary Emeritus of the International Baptist Convention, died of cancer on December 30. He was 76.

In 1972 he became the General Secretary of the European Baptist Convention, an association of English-speaking congregations in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. It changed its name to the International Baptist Convention in 2003. Merritt retired from his position in 1996.

A memorial service was held at University Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He leaves behind his wife, Elizabeth, and two sons.

**Wiard Popkes**

Wiard Popkes, a retired professor at the Baptist Seminary of Hamburg and long-time trustee chairman of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, died of a heart attack on January 3. He was 70.

As chairman of the IBTS board, Popkes also oversaw the school’s purchase, renovation and the 1996 move to a picturesque 19th-century campus in Prague, Czech Republic.

Popkes was one of European Baptists’ best-known New Testament scholars. The seminary’s rector was also one of the seminary’s earliest graduates.

Besides his IBTS degree, Popkes received his doctorate in New Testament from the University of Zurich. In addition to his seminary teaching, he taught at the University of Hamburg.

Popkes was a long-standing member of the BWA’s Academic and Theological Education Workgroup, as well as the Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation.

He is survived by his wife, Irmgard, and a son.

**William Cumbie**

William Cumbie, former president of the Baptist General Association of Virginia and executive director of the Mount Vernon Baptist Association, died February 19 in Springfield, Virginia in the United States, of complications related to stroke. He was 83 years old.

Cumbie, who attended 12 Baptist World Alliance world congresses, events held five years apart, served the BWA on various committees and workgroups. At the Centenary World Congress held in July 2005, Cumbie described his “Baptist World Alliance participation as a series of mountain-top experiences of personal growth.”

BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz said of Cumbie, “When I became General Secretary, Bill was a very close counselor and advisor.”

Among other areas of service to the BWA, Cumbie was a special assistant to General Secretary Robert Denny, as well as a member of the Promotion and Development Executive Committee and the Christian Education Workgroup.

A memorial service in his honor was held on Sunday, February 25, at Westwood Baptist Church, Springfield, Virginia. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions were made to the William J. Cumbie Emerging Leaders Fund of the Baptist World Alliance

He leaves behind wife Catherine and four children, Elizabeth C. Fogg, James E. Cumbie, Rebecca C. Sykes and Judith C. Seltz.
Adams, who died on December 27, 2006, of Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, ALS or Lou Gehrig’s disease, was General Secretary of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship (AABF) for over nine years, from 1997 until the time of his death. He served the Ghana Baptist Convention (GBC) as its General Secretary from 1992 to 2000.

Born in Kumasi in South Central Ghana, the African Baptist leader was instrumental in reuniting and rebuilding the GBC during his tenure as the convention’s General Secretary after the organization endured a split in the 1980s. By 2000, when he demitted office, the convention had 1,000 churches compared to 200 in 1992 when he became General Secretary.

Adams succeeded Eleazar Ziherambere of Rwanda as General Secretary of the AABF. Adams had the task of representing the BWA to the more than 50 conventions and unions in 28 countries on the continent. Throughout his tenure, he served with dedication and humility with limited resources and in often difficult circumstances.

At his funeral, held in Kumasi, representatives from around Africa, including AABF President Paul Msiza of South Africa, attended and participated in the services held on Saturday, February 3, and on Sunday, February 4.

Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Denton Lotz, along with Emmett Dunn, BWA Youth Department and Congress Director, attended. Lotz, who preached at the thanksgiving service on Sunday, reported that the services “Remind Christians worldwide many things about celebrating death in light of Christ’s resurrection.” He said that “In Ghana we experienced the strong faith of a Christ-centered community that in many and various ways exhibited the gifts of the Spirit. Because Christ lives we have hope for tomorrow.”

AABF President Msiza described Adams as “A humble leader, a man full of wisdom and passion for Africa.” He hailed the ability of Adams to keep the AABF together by ensuring peace and unity among its conventions and unions, and for the partnerships that Adams established within the continental (Continued on next page)
federation. “He passed on while working on a great assignment to build capacity within theological institutions to encourage leadership development for Africa.”

The GBC recalled the work of the outstanding leader while he headed the Ghana convention. In its tribute, the GBC spoke of his ability to listen, his visits to churches and associations, and his bridging of the communication gap between the churches and the convention. Adams left the convention with a healthy reserve fund and established a ‘Needy Pastors Support Fund’ which aided pastors in financially deprived areas.

Lotz’s BWA tribute described the late leader as “A person of peace” with “Quiet and calm skills.” He lauded Adams as a “Trained missiologist who was concerned about contextualizing the Gospel for all of Africa. His strong and quiet determination to encourage Africans to evangelize and speak for social justice made him a prophetic voice among African Baptists.”

The most moving tributes came from Adams’ family. Selena, Frank Adams’ widow, described ‘Kwesi’ (his African name), as “A dear loving husband” and “An intimate and compassionate friend.” In speaking of his many travels, she made reference to his habit of keeping in close touch even while far away, but “Kwesi, you have been away for barely one month now, but I have not heard a word from you. I do miss you and want to hear from you. This long silence clearly indicates that the Lord has called you home.”

His three children, two sons and one daughter said, “In our deepest sorrow, it seems that our grief is endless, but we realized that our pain and grief is as a result of the wonderful relationship we had with a great and remarkable father – our friend.”

Adams held a masters’ degree from International Baptist Theological Seminary in Switzerland and a PhD from Oxford Centre for Mission Studies in the United Kingdom. He was 57 years old.

Denton Lotz with Frank Adams’ family

“... a prophetic voice among African Baptists.”
Joao and Nora Matwawana, a couple from Angola, are the recipients of the 2007 Denton Lotz Human Rights Award.

The Matwawanas have played a pivotal role in reconciliation and peace efforts in Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Angola since the 1970s.

Their peace efforts included working among the more than one million refugees who fled Rwanda to the DRC in 1994; repeated visits to refugees living in camps in Zambia; visits to Burundi to discuss peace and nation building initiatives with government officials, including with the country’s president and church and NGO leaders; meeting with a Burundi rebel leader in Holland and South Africa to successfully negotiate peace; the training of Angolan refugees in conflict resolution, mediation, peace and reconciliation; as well as several peace missions in Angola.

Born in northern Angola in the late 1930’s as direct descendants of the kings of the ancient Kingdom of the Congo, both Joao and Nora Matwawana were educators before embracing a call to train for the pastoral ministry. They were appointed as missionaries by Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM) to serve in Africa.

A former General Secretary of the United Protestant Churches of Angola in Exile, Joao and his wife had to flee their homeland three times, to the DRC in 1961 and 1975, and to Canada in the early 1980s, due to Angola’s war for independence and civil wars.

Gary Nelson, General Secretary of CBM and a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), said of Joao, “His work . . . is a story of grassroots actions and initiatives that took place in the most dangerous of situations and the most unlikely locations while others were meeting only to discuss peace.”

Of the work done by Nora, John Keith, who wrote the 2006 biography, ‘Wars Are Never Enough: The Joao Matwawana Story’, said, “The most prominent physical monument to Nora Matwawana’s investment of herself in training African women is located in Kivu Province of Eastern Congo—DRC. It is the Centre Sociale Mama Nora, which grew out of Nora’s experiences in Angola, Western Congo, Kenya, Canada and India.”

Now retired and living in Canada, the two are the first to be jointly awarded the BWA Human Rights Award, which, for the first time, is renamed the Denton Lotz Human Rights Award in honor of BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz who retires at the end of 2007. The award will be presented during the BWA Annual General Council meeting set for Accra, Ghana in July of this year.
Neville Callam – Jamaican pastor, theologian, author, media manager and educator – has been nominated to succeed Denton Lotz as General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance.

Baptist World Alliance Nominates Jamaican as New General Secretary

BY ERON HENRY

Neville Callam, a Jamaican pastor, theologian, author, media manager and educator, has been nominated to succeed Denton Lotz as General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). Lotz retires in December 2007.

Callam has had a long history of involvement in the BWA beginning in 1985. He served the international body as vice president from 2000 to 2005, and sits on its influential Implementation Task Force, which has the mandate to make recommended structural and other changes to the BWA. In addition, he has been a member of the Executive Committee and the General Council.

The Harvard graduate and Christian Ethics specialist has also served the BWA on its Academic and Theological Education Workgroup, Christian Ethics Commission, Division of Evangelism and Education Executive Committee, Division of Study and Research Executive Committee and the Membership Committee, among other committees, commissions and workgroups.

In the Caribbean, he served as president of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) between 1985 and 1987, and from 2000 to 2002. He has held every senior position in the Jamaican convention, including vice president, general treasurer, and acting general secretary, and has given unbroken service on its Executive Committee since 1980. He is a former vice president of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, one of six continental federations that make up the BWA.

Callam holds several senior positions in media in Jamaica. He is chairman of the board of management and former general manager of The Breath of Change, a Christian radio station he founded, and is chairman of the board of the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica, a public statutory organization. He is also a founding director of the National Religious Media Company of Jamaica, the largest religious radio and television broadcasting company in the country. Callam formerly chaired the Media Commission of the JBU which is responsible for the denomination’s radio and publication ministries.

A sought-after lecturer and teacher, Callam has taught at the United Theological College of the West Indies, Jamaica Theological Seminary, the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology, and as visiting lecturer at the Barbados Baptist College. He sits on the...
University Council of Jamaica, the major accreditation body for colleges and universities on the island.

The author of five books has written for several journals and has made presentations at numerous conferences, workshops, symposia and fora internationally, including in Spain, Mexico, Ireland, France, Thailand, South Africa, Malaysia, Germany, and other countries. He was one of the leading presenters at the BWA Centenary Congress held in Birmingham, England, in 2005.

In speaking of his commitment to the Christian gospel, Callam said, “Living for Jesus is what my life is about. My calling is to serve the cause of Christ. I have had reason to be very thankful for my Baptist heritage, which I celebrate.”

Callam has been an ordained Baptist pastor since 1977 and currently serves as senior pastor of the Tarrant Baptist Church in Kingston, Jamaica’s capital. He holds degrees from the University of the West Indies and Harvard Divinity School. He and wife, Dulcie, are the parents of two adult children.

Callam’s name is forwarded for the position of General Secretary after a long and exhaustive international search conducted by the Search Committee, chaired by John Sundquist. The committee consists of representatives from all six continental federations of the BWA, in addition to the core members of the Personnel Committee. The process began with an invitation extended at the July 2006 General Council meeting in Mexico City for Baptists all over the world to submit nominations. After the time period for nominations closed October 31, 2006, the search committee engaged in a series of meetings and interviews that culminated with the recommendation of Neville Callam.

Search committee chairman Sundquist said that “In reviewing the documents and references and after the interviews, it is clear that Neville Callam is the kind of ecclesiastical and Christian statesman that we can have pride in.

“It is wonderful to meet someone whose biblical and theological grounding is not only deep, but whose life is such that his relationship with Christ and commitment to the church is so obvious.”

The vote for General Secretary will take place during the BWA General Council meeting in Accra, Ghana, in July of this year.

His biblical and theological grounding is deep, his relationship with Christ and commitment to the church is obvious.

— Search Committee chair John Sundquist
New Baptist World Alliance Website

The Baptist World Alliance has launched its new website! The website, while more attractive than the previous one, aims to more fully reflect the ministries performed by the BWA in mission and evangelism, relief and sustainable community development, worship and fellowship, theological reflection, as well as the unity of all Baptists. It is also aimed at reporting news within the Baptist family worldwide.

Please visit our new website at www.bwanet.org.

Our grateful thanks to the following friends for their gifts to the Baptist World Alliance

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“The world coming together”

is how Baptist World Alliance youth and conference director, Emmett Dunn, describes the Baptist World Youth Conference, held every five years. Eight to ten thousand youth are expected to attend the next conference, the fifteenth, to be held in Leipzig, Germany, July 30 to August 3, 2008.

The youth conference is a unique gathering for young people from across the globe to join together in worship and in missions and to see what God is doing among youth around the world. Past youth conferences in Houston, Texas, USA, in 1998 and Hong Kong, China, in 2004 drew 8,000 youth from 87 countries and 4,000 youth from 66 countries respectively.

(Continued on next page)
A unique opportunity to listen to the stories of youth from around the world . . .

Under the theme, ‘Dive Deeper,’ youth attending the 2008 conference will be encouraged to dive deeper in commitment to Christ, in the study of God’s Word, in missions, and in fellowship.

There will be events in the program for collective worship and study, such as morning worship services, concerts, and evening sessions with keynote speakers. There will also be small group experiences. All conference participants will be divided into family groups of 20 to 25 persons that will discuss the Bible study presented in the morning service. Family groups provide a good opportunity for fellowship, networking and cultural exchange.

A ‘Global Village’ will also allow youth to experience and interact with other cultures. As youth walk through the Global Village they will encounter music, dance, artifacts, artwork and storytelling from many of the diverse cultures of the Baptist family.

Missions will be a key emphasis of the conference. There will be opportunities for youth to engage in mission projects prior to and following the conference, not just within Germany, but throughout Europe. All projects will be geared toward evangelism and will include activities like sports workshops, work in orphanages and hospitals, children’s camps, and construction.

Youth will also have an opportunity to reach out to communities in Leipzig, the small eastern German city that is home to half a million people. On Saturday afternoon, the conference participants will minister through music and arts in five different locations around the city and then the youth will come together for a large worship celebration in Leipzig’s city square. “We want to engage the Leipzig community,” explains Dunn. “We want to bring the conference to the people of Leipzig.”

The significance of the youth conference cannot be minimized. “The youth conference is not just an event, but an experience,” says Dunn. Youth attending the conference will be provided a unique opportunity to listen to the stories of other youth from around the world and to see that they are part of a larger family.

As Dunn describes, “It can be easy for youth to get discouraged, especially those who come from small and sometimes impoverished communities. The youth conference enables these youth to see that they belong to a large and very diverse group of people called Baptists. The youth conference challenges youth first to be more committed to Christ, but also to be confident of who we are as Baptists and to realize the freedom they have as young Baptists.”

Additional information about the 15th Baptist Youth World Conference can be found at the conference website, www.dive-deeper.org, or at the Baptist World Alliance website, www.bwanet.org.

Online registration is now available at: www.dive-deeper.org.

Scenes from the last Youth Conference held in Hong Kong in 2004
The disciples said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?” Luke 24:32

Confrontation with the resurrected Christ creates within believers’ hearts a wonder and joy, a feeling that surpasses all emotions! It does not just happen with a fast prayer, but it comes through meditation, studying scripture, prayer and allowing Christ to instruct us. The disciples were discouraged because they had lost hope and they did not know the scriptures. Their minds and hearts were on themselves and not on Christ. But when they looked at Jesus and broke bread with him, their eyes were opened.

Men and women in the church need burning hearts. They need to get their eyes off of others and look into Christ’s eyes. Then their hurts will burn with joy and others will experience the resurrected Christ in their lives. They will experience forgiveness, love and reconciliation. Beyond the ideologies and struggles of postmodern man, humanity is waiting for a voice to cheer them on their way. They are waiting for an experience of God to give them hope and forgiveness.

This is the way John Wesley experienced the resurrected Christ:

“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in the Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Moses had an experience of God and the burning bush. Isaiah’s mouth was touched with burning coals. Paul had a blinding vision of light. Men and women throughout the centuries who have looked to Christ have all had burning hearts after experiencing the resurrected Christ. When Pascal died, a memorial poem was found sewed in his coat which read: “Fire. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob. Not of the philosophers and of the learned. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace. God of Jesus Christ. My God and your God...Renunciation, total and sweet. Complete submission to Jesus Christ . . . .”

Modern humanity is searching for a spiritual experience, but is looking in the wrong place. We are so distracted by the noise of modernity that we miss the calmness and peace of the resurrected Christ who would come to us if we would but open our eyes to Him!

During this Lenten season when we prepare to celebrate the great event of Easter, let us be quiet. Let us renounce ourselves, our search for power, glory and honor in the church and the world. Let us break bread with the poor, the outcast, those who are searching for meaning and purpose in life. If we do that, then the non-believing world should see “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Then there will be revival in our churches. What a beautiful image of the church that would be: a church of burning hearts! Hearts afire for a lost world, for a world at war, a world of intolerable evil, a world that is heading for destruction in so many ways.

Baptists of the world need to put down their swords, as Jesus commanded Peter, and look into the face of Jesus. Then our hearts will feel strangely warmed. Then our hearts will burn and we shall sing with a new generation of young people, “Shine, Jesus shine, fill this land with the Father’s glory; Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.”
Every year, Baptists around the world set aside a special Sunday to recognize the larger body of Christ and pray for each other. We ask God to help those who are denied religious freedom and who suffer for their faith, and pray for the Gospel to reach the ends of the earth. In addition, Baptist churches gather a special offering for the ministries of the Baptist World Alliance.

**We hope your church will join us on May 6, 2007 in celebrating Baptist World Alliance Sunday.**

Your church’s participation in the BWA Sunday will:

- Join Baptists in worship and fellowship
- Nurture mission and evangelism
- Defend religious liberty and human rights
- Respond through relief and development
- Promote theological study and reflection

Special informational materials for BWA Day, including bulletin inserts, offering envelopes and brochures, are available upon request. Order forms are available on the BWA website, www.bwanet.org or contact Linda Falimy at communications@bwanet.org, +1-703.790.8980 or +1-703.893-5160 (fax) to place your order.