A Caribbean pioneer

He was described as a pioneer, “bearing the brunt of being first in many things.”

These and other accolades were poured out on Horace Russell, retired Professor of Historical Theology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (now Palmer Theological Seminary) in Philadelphia, USA, and former president of the Jamaican-based United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI), the Caribbean’s leading Protestant theological institution of higher learning.

Russell and wife Beryl were celebrating 50 years of his ordination to Christian ministry, during a service of appreciation and thanksgiving at the Calabar Chapel in Kingston, Jamaica’s capital, on Tuesday, February 19. Russell was ordained at the same venue in February 1958.

Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam told the congregation, “It is appropriate that the BWA joins with you all in celebrating… his (Russell’s) diligence to the cause of Christ.” Russell taught Callam and was president of the UTCWI while the BWA General Secretary was a student there in the 1970s.

Callam recounted Russell’s contribution to the international church community, including his membership within the BWA Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity, his authorship of the first chapter in “Baptists Together in Christ 1905-2005,” a 100-year history of the BWA published in celebration of the BWA’s centennial anniversary in 2005, and his many years as a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. He has also authored several books on church history.

Church leaders from a cross section of Jamaica’s Christian community, two ministers of government, Jamaica’s ambassador to the United States, Anthony Johnson, and other leading Jamaican personalities, also turned out to honor Russell, who was a pastor, educator, broadcaster, and public servant in Jamaica prior to going to Palmer Seminary in 1989.

Burchell Taylor, President of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, one of six continental federations of the BWA, and a former Russell student, delivered the keynote address.

Baptists of Pfutsero

Eron Henry reports on the BWA visit to Pfutsero where Baptists are committed to ministry and evangelism.

From left, Beryl Russell, daughters Heather and Elizabeth, Horace Russell
24 Christians in Palestine Suffer
The recent upsurge in fighting between Israeli security forces and Hamas has made a bad situation worse for Christians, including Baptists, in the West Bank and Gaza. While the future of the church hangs in the balance, a team of European Baptist leaders visited Israel and Palestine in February.

25 Bangladesh Church Leader to Receive BWA Human Rights Award
Dennis Dilip Datta, a Baptist leader from the Muslim-majority country of Bangladesh, is the 2008 recipient of the Baptist World Alliance Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award. Datta is being recognized for his advocacy for Bangladesh independence, restoration of democracy, and religious freedom for his country.

26 Karen Women Struggle for Rights and Freedom
Blooming Night Zahn is working to bring the world’s attention to the systematic abuse against the Karen people by the military regime in Myanmar, formerly Burma. While detailing horrific atrocities against her (majority Baptist) people, she never loses hope in the Lord’s presence and care.

27 North Americans Celebrate Unity
A veritable “Who’s Who” of Baptist leaders met in Atlanta, Georgia, for The Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant to reaffirm “traditional Baptist values, including sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and its implications for public and private morality.”

29 Book Note
No Armor for the Back: Baptist Prison Writings, 1600s–1700s
by Keith E. Durso

30 In Memoriam
Daily survival in a refugee camp. Karen children helping their parents in farming
FROM THE PRESIDENT
David Coffey

Why the BWA needs Smart Baptists!

The idea of smart Baptists was given to me by my friend Teddy Oprenov, the General Secretary of Bulgarian Baptists. We were in a committee discussing how the BWA will increasingly be guided by our five clusters of commitment when Teddy showed me his scribble pad with the word SMART!

Standing together in worship, fellowship and unity
Moving strategically in mission and evangelism
Acting justly for human rights and religious freedom
Responding to human need and engaging in sustainable development
Thinking theologically

Let me elaborate what I think it means to be a smart Baptist.

Standing Together in Worship, Fellowship and Unity

The bedrock principle of a Christ-centered unity is where all Baptist fellowship begins. We are a diverse people who are “all one in Christ Jesus.” Our Lord warned against making human traditions into doctrines of the faith (Mark 7:8) and too often Baptists are gathering around their human traditions rather than following obediently the Head of the Church.

I remember reading the story of a Baptist convention going through a very stressful period of conflict. In one meeting a member said rather bitterly that their differences had become so great that people were building walls to keep each other out. One member responded by saying:

“Why don’t we take the same bricks and build a bridge instead.”

Smart Baptists are bridge builders.

Moving Strategically in Mission and Evangelism

In the current edition of the respected Missiometrics survey one of the statistical tables highlights 50 reality checks concerning the challenge of world evangelization. The 50 reality checks include:

* 95.6% of people have access to scriptures in 6,600 languages, leaving 286 million people speaking 7,000 languages with no access at all to the scriptures
* 40% of foreign mission resources are being deployed to just over 10 oversaturated countries which have strong national Christian ministries
* 1,192 identifiable people groups have never been evangelized by any Christian mission agency (pages 27-30 of the January 2008 edition of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research).

Smart Baptists should ask what implications the Missiometrics survey has for a BWA desiring to move strategically in mission and evangelism.

Acting Justly for Human Rights and Religious Freedom

Soon after the conclusion of the Nagaland BWA Living Water Conference held in December, the BWA received the news that some of those present at the conference had returned to Orissa to face a terrible outbreak of persecution from extremist Hindus. Some of these extremists went on a rampage on Christmas Eve. Six hundred homes of Christians and almost 100 places of worship were fire bombed and destroyed and hundreds of Christians became homeless.

According to unofficial sources eight people were killed. The All India Christian Council described the attacks as the worst case of anti-Christian violence in India since independence in 1947.

Smart Baptists know the struggle for freedom and justice is never ending and we need vigilance if we are to be an effective voice for the voiceless.

Responding to Human Need and Engaging in Sustainable Community Development

A friend of mine visited Sudan and saw the work of the churches in providing shelter and health care to those forced from their homes by the 21-year conflict. He expressed his concern that the dividends of the 2005 peace accord were not much in evidence. But, in the face of all this, what encouraged my friend was the miraculously enduring delivery mechanisms of the churches. Time and again the places he visited where hope was most in evidence were those with strong links to the local church.

Smart Baptists always think locally while acting globally.

Thinking Theologically

Last October the BWA received a copy of the Common Word letter, sent from Muslim scholars to the Pope. Before replying we decided to consult within the Baptist family – and we have a diversity of opinion.

There are Baptists who would only want negative statements about Islam because they see it as a dangerous religion hostile to Christians. Some would want to respond but are cautious. The caution is the conviction that any discussions with Islam (even by letter) must never neuter our missionary obligation of mission and evangelism to Muslims. Others want us to send a written response which expresses the Gospel conviction that salvation is uniquely found in Jesus Christ and endorses the fundamental principle of a religious freedom which includes the human right to convert from one religion to another.

Smart Baptists, whatever their views, know the importance of thinking theologically on such important matters.

Just five reasons why the BWA needs Smart Baptists!
British Pastor Appointed UN Special Advisor

Steve Chalke, a Baptist pastor from Britain, has been appointed special advisor to the United Nation’s Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT).

Chalke, chair of Stop the Traffik, a global coalition of some 1,000 organizations and charities in 60 countries that works to stop the buying and selling of people, will advise the UN on Community Action against Human Trafficking within the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

UN.GIFT was launched in March 2007 by the UNODC and is managed in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, the International Labor Organization, the UN Children’s Fund, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The author of more than 40 books has been a long time campaigner to end poverty through housing, healthcare and educational projects. He has become a major advocate in the anti-trafficking campaign.

“The crime of people trafficking – or, to put it in stark terms, modern slavery – for sex, forced labor and even organ harvesting is one that shames us all,” Chalke said during the opening session of the first international anti-human trafficking forum held in Vienna, Austria, from February 13 to 15. The event, planned by UN.GIFT, drew 1,200 delegates from the 192-member countries of the UN.

Human trafficking is “the world’s fastest growing crime,” and is “a great evil” that needs to be defeated, Chalke said. Approximately 2.5 million persons, mostly aged 18 to 24, become victims of human trafficking worldwide each year, generating an estimated US$31 billion.

Chalke, described by Paul Montacute, Director of Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), as “probably the UK’s best known Baptist pastor,” was one of the major speakers at the 1988 Baptist World Alliance Youth Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, and at the 1995 BWA World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Chalke also led a Focus Group at the BWA Centenary World Congress in Birmingham, England in 2005 titled an “Afternoon with Steve Chalke,” with focus on “The Church – The Real Health Service and the role of the Church in building the Kingdom of God.”

The OBE is one of several honors awarded by the Queen, with persons named to the Queen’s New Year’s Honors list.

Coffey Honored by Queen

Baptist World Alliance (BWA) President David Coffey was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Coffey, BWA President since 2005, was honored with the OBE for his services to inter-faith relations.

He previously served 15 years as General Secretary for the Baptist Union of Great Britain and was Moderator of the Free Churches in Britain for several years. The Free Churches is a grouping of Protestant and Evangelical churches that includes the Baptist, Methodist, Salvation Army and the Assemblies of God churches, among others.

Coffey was also one of the four presidents of the ecumenical group, Churches Together in England, along with the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, and the Primate of the Armenian Church of Great Britain.

The BWA leader stated that the honor given by the Queen is “recognition of great work that is done by the thousands of Baptists and unsung heroes who will not appear on any honors list, but who we would be lost without.”

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam said, “David Coffey is a worthy beneficiary of the distinguished honor bestowed on him. His has been a life of service built on the foundation of vocational self-understanding and fueled by a keen mind, an uncompromising commitment to excellence, and a readiness to serve for the sake of Christ and the Church.

“The Baptist World Alliance holds David in very high esteem and we dare to entertain the thought that we have a share in the honor he has received.”

BWA NEWS IN BRIEF

The OBE is one of several honors awarded by the Queen, with persons named to the Queen’s New Year’s Honors list.

Steve Chalke speaking at the United Nation's Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking in February.

Photo courtesy of Stop the Traffik
Asian Youth Held Leadership Conference in Japan

One hundred and fifteen delegates from 10 countries attended the Asian Baptist Youth Leadership Conference in Japan in January.

Hosted by the Okinawa Baptist Convention, a member body of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), the conference included workshops on Bible study, music, public speaking and writing.

Delegates participated in community evangelism, such as the distribution of tracts and witnessing, and shared in worship services in local churches. The 37 international delegates enjoyed a night of celebration of Japanese culture with the 78 youth delegates from throughout Japan.

The aim of the conference was “to better equip our emerging leaders with useful skills to be on the cutting edge of their ministry,” said Jesse Ray Porras, president of the Asian Baptist Youth Fellowship (ABYF). The ABYF is the youth department for the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation, one of six regional bodies for the BWA.

Joe Bildan, pastor at the Trinidad Baptist Church in Baguio in the Philippines, said, “I went home a changed pastor, this time with more passion and compassion for the lost youth of the world.”

Speakers at the conference included president of the BWA Youth Department, Eiji Osato, who is a Japanese missionary in Thailand, and Edwin Lam of Singapore.

The conference focused on the theme, “Surfing Spiritual Waves,” and was held January 10 to 14.

Russia
Baptists Went on 4,000 Kilometer Evangelism Mission in Siberia

Baptists of Russia embarked on an “evangelism tour” to Siberia.

The 4,000 kilometer (2,400 mile) journey began on February 10 in Hanti-Mansiisk, north of Tiumen in western Siberia, and ended on March 26 in Moscow.

Planned by the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (RUECB), a member body of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), the journey had three main objectives: evangelism; visiting missionaries who are “living in very remote and nearly inaccessible locales;” and making contacts “with many non-RUECB congregations of Baptist orientation.”

Dubbed “The Gospel for the peoples of the North,” the tour covered some treacherous and very difficult terrain. “The missionaries in the Far North can only be visited in the winter when the ground conditions are most stable. When again heading southward, the tundra (was) replaced by the forests of the taiga,” wrote William Yoder, head of the Department for External Church Relations for RUECB. “The hardest driving conditions (are) in the taiga” as the “roadless forests…demand zigzag driving on the southward journey.”

The six-week tour, which passed just below the Artic Circle through some of the most extreme climatic conditions, was supported financially by local Baptists in Russia.

This was the fourth evangelism tour planned by the RUECB. The previous was a 15,000 kilometer (9,000 mile) bicycle tour in 2007 that began in Varel, Germany, on May 13, and ended in Vladivostok, Russia, on September 2. Another bicycle tour is planned for early July from Krasnodar in the south via Moscow, to Murmansk in the Far North.

The RUECB is Russia’s largest Protestant church, representing 80,000 members in 1,750 congregations and groups. Yuri Sipko, a vice president of the BWA, is RUECB president.
Kenyans in Uganda who fled the rioting in their country have received assistance from Baptist World Aid (BWAid), the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance.

The aid from the international Baptist organization was granted after an appeal from Hillary Wafula, a Baptist pastor in the border town of Busia, Uganda, where 1,700 Kenyan refugees are housed in a primary (elementary) school. Another 2,500 displaced Kenyans are in the Ugandan town of Malaba, which also borders Kenya, and an estimated 3,000 are in several villages bordering the two east African countries. Five thousand displaced persons are on the Kenyan side of the town of Busia, “who can cross any time” into Uganda, said Wafula.

Wafula, in his letter to Alex Wanyama, General Secretary for the Baptist Union of Uganda, said, “One pastor who is hosting a number of Kenyans is overwhelmed by the number and the debts he is making to make them survive.” He also reported that “a good number of Kenyans are residing with friends, relatives and well-wishers in border villages in Uganda, which is an unbearably heavy burden on the Ugandans.”

The needs of the displaced Kenyans include food, medicine, shelter, and sanitation. “The Baptist churches in Busia and Malaba are appealing to our mother organization, Baptist Union of Uganda, and partners, to intervene and help the overwhelming burden we are experiencing in our homes and at churches,” Wafula requested.

BWAid sent US$5,000 to Uganda to assist the displaced Kenyans. This follows on US$10,000 that was sent during the week of January 7 to the All Africa Baptist Fellowship for relief efforts in Kenya.

Baptists have a significant presence in the African country. The Baptist Convention of Kenya, a member body of the BWA, has approximately 625,000 members in nearly 3,000 churches.
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) is joining together with the Lafayette affiliate of Habitat for Humanity to build six homes in southwest Louisiana for families affected by Hurricane Rita, a category five storm that hit the Gulf Coast of the USA in September of 2005.

More than 250 volunteers are expected to participate throughout the course of the four-week “BWA Blitz Build” in Vermilion Parish, Louisiana, from April 20 to May 17, 2008. Nearly one-third of the homes in the parish were destroyed by Hurricane Rita, and many people remain in temporary housing or live in homes still damaged by the storm.

Suzette Bonin and her young daughter were living three miles from Vermilion Bay when the hurricane hit, inundating their home with 17 feet of water, and destroying all of their belongings.

The apartment of Allen and Shacira Savoy was flooded by the storm. The sewers backed up, and most of their furniture and other possessions were lost. The Savoys and their five children, ranging in age from eight months to nine years old, have been living in a FEMA trailer.

James and Susan Gibson lost everything they owned in the hurricane. The couple moved in with their son, but his trailer was destroyed by a tornado and they were forced to relocate again.

These families, and three additional families, will be beneficiaries of the homes constructed during the Blitz Build. As part of the Habitat program, the new homeowners will contribute “sweat equity” by helping to build their home, by volunteering at the Habitat ReStore, or by taking classes about home ownership.

Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the BWA, provided funds toward the construction of three of the homes to be built during the Blitz. Three BWA Global Impact Churches, First Baptist Church of Wilmington, North Carolina, Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Virginia, and Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, contributed money needed for the additional three homes. Volunteers from several Baptist churches will help with the building.

This year’s Blitz is the second in which the BWA has participated. In the 2007 Blitz, volunteers constructed 12 homes in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for victims of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina.

For information about volunteering for the 2008 BWA Blitz Build, contact jjjustus@bwanet.org.

British Baptist to Head US Seminary

The head of BMS World Mission, the British Baptist mission agency, has been selected to be the 10th president of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS) in Chicago, Illinois, in the United States.

Alistair Brown, General Director of BMS World Mission since 1996, was elected as the next president of NBTS by its board of trustees while Brown attended Executive Committee meetings of the Baptist World Alliance in Honolulu, Hawaii, in early March.

Brown, a former journalist and ordained pastor, was born near Edinburgh, Scotland. He first worked as a church planter in Livingston, and served for more than 10 years as senior pastor at a church in Aberdeen, Scotland.

“Walking by faith never ends, so exploring this role is part of my faith journey. Christ is more real and more precious now than ever before, and my determination to know and do his will controls all my decisions,” Brown said, according to a release from NBTS.

In announcing his appointment as seminary president to BMS staff in Didcot, Oxfordshire, England, Brown stated, “It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life to work for BMS. But nothing in this world is forever and I believe God has called me to something new, and for that reason, and only that reason, I’m willing to leave.”

The new seminary president holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Edinburgh, and an MBA from The Open University.

Brown, who is chairman of the Membership Committee of the BWA, is also a member of its General Council and Executive Committee, as well as the Constitution/Bylaws Committee, the Commission on Freedom and Justice, the Mission and Evangelism Workgroup, and the Congress Program Committee, among others.

The author of several publications, including “Near Christianity” and “I Believe in Mission,” is expected to take up his new position at the beginning of the next school year.

Hondurans Celebrate 50th Anniversary

The National Convention of Baptist Churches in Honduras (CONIBAH) commemorated its fiftieth anniversary at a celebration held February 7 to 8 in Tegucigalpa, the capital of the Central American nation.

Gilberto Gutiérrez, pastor of Horeb Baptist Church in Mexico City, and former President of the National Baptist Convention
Flooding resulting from heavy and steady rainfall that started in February, and which is expected to continue through May, has caused catastrophic damage in the South American country of Ecuador.

Up to the end of February, an estimated 16 persons were killed. The heavy rains caused more than US$200 million in damage and destruction to property, and more than 250,000 acres of farmland were flooded. As a result, the president of the country, Rafael Correa, declared a state of emergency, saying, according to Reuters AlertNet, “This is not an emergency, this is a disaster. We don’t have enough resources to help all the victims.”

Parrish Jácome, pastor of the Christian Baptist Church in Guayaquil, reported to the BWA that “many farmers have lost their harvests.” Children, he said, suffer from “infections and diseases that are usually caused by unclean water and lack of supplies.” Jácome, former president of the Baptist Convention of Ecuador, a member body of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), further stated that “more than 10,000 families need supplies, medicine, clothing, and first aid equipment to survive.”

Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the BWA, has agreed to send US$10,000 in emergency relief assistance. “We would appreciate your response to fulfill the needs... so we can serve as the bridge of help to these people,” Jácome appealed to director of BWAid, Paul Montacute.

The heavy rains are said to be caused by La Niña, an unusual cooling of Pacific Ocean surface temperatures that can trigger widespread changes in weather around the world, including hurricanes and torrential rain. The effects of this system are expected to last until June.

of Mexico, was the main speaker for the celebration, and Miguel Angel Guerra, a famous musician from Honduras, led some of the worship music.

Five hundred persons attended the daily activities, and the evening events drew much larger crowds.

Raquel Contreras, president of the Union of Baptists in Latin America and a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance, attended the anniversary celebration.

CONIBAH has 444 churches and close to 25,000 members.
Jamaica

Neville Callam Returns Home

For the very first time since he assumed duties as General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance in September 2007, Neville Callam returned to his homeland of Jamaica in February.

The first black person and the first from outside Europe or North America to hold the position of BWA General Secretary, Callam had a busy schedule, including being keynote speaker at a convocation marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of the University of the West Indies, the leading tertiary institution in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Callam also attended and spoke at a worship service planned to celebrate and mark the 50th anniversary of the ordination of Horace Russell, the leading Caribbean church historian and historical theologian. He brought greetings during the opening service of the 158th General Assembly of the Jamaica Baptist Union, which was held February 20 to 24 in Kingston, Jamaica’s capital.

Callam made courtesy calls on Jamaica’s head of state, His Excellency the Most Honourable Professor Sir Kenneth Hall, Governor General, and Jamaica’s first woman chief justice, Zaila McCalla. Desmond McKenzie, mayor of Kingston, also welcomed Callam on his brief trip back home.

Accompanying Callam on his Jamaican trip was Eron Henry, BWA communications director, also a Jamaican.

Chile

Chilean Baptists Celebrate Centenary

Baptists in Chile recently celebrated 100 years of Baptist witness in the South American country.

The celebration, which took place January 9 to 12 at the Baptist Academy in Temuco, included a special worship service and a presentation of Handel’s Messiah by a combined choir and orchestra drawn from several Chilean towns and cities. Also part of the festivities was a demonstration march from the Baptist Academy to the Central Plaza Aníbal Pinto by mainly high school and university students to showcase the Baptist presence in Chile and to share the love of Christ.

The four day celebration concluded in the town of Cajón where Baptist witness began in 1908. A baptismal service was held in the nearby river and the Lord’s Supper was observed.

United States

Charles Wade Retires

Charles Wade, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT), has retired.

Wade, whose retirement became effective January 31, and who served in the executive position for eight years, was honored at a dinner held on February 25 in Dallas, Texas.

The Texas Baptist leader was commended for his bold initiatives and his commitment to diversity. “Reaching across racial and ethnic lines is just a natural part of Charles Wade’s Christian walk,” the Baptist Standard quoted Jimmy Allen, former BGCT president.

Wade oversaw the racial and ethnic integration of the BGCT staff, governing board, and various committees within the Texas Baptist convention. He also ensured that BGCT had close affiliations with “African-Americans, Hispanics, cowboy churches, intercultural ministry and bivocational or small-church ministers,” according to a report from the Baptist Standard.

BGCT and the Baptist General Association of Virginia broke new ground when, in 2005, they became the first state conventions within the United States to become member bodies of the Baptist World Alliance.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam attended the dinner held in honor of Wade’s retirement.

Dallas Baptist University announced the creation of an endowed scholarship in honor of Wade and his wife, Rosemary; and Baylor Health Care System made a contribution to the medical system’s chaplaincy program in Wade’s honor.

Randel Everett, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Newport News, Virginia, and founding president of the John Leland Center for Theological Studies in Arlington, Virginia, has succeeded Wade as BGCT executive director.
and Robert Nash of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in the United States and a member of the BWA Baptist Heritage and Identity Commission.

Raquel Contreras, who is president of UBLA, a vice president of the BWA, and also president of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile, presided.

Approximately five Baptist churches were founded in the Temuco region of Chile in 1908. There are two Baptist conventions in the country of more than 16 million people. The Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches and the Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission have a combined membership of approximately 30,000 members and almost 370 churches.

Left: Church, civic and government leaders join Chilean Baptists in worship to mark 100th anniversary.

Above: New Christians are baptized in the river in Cajón in Chile.
Getting ready for Hawaii in 2010

by Eron Henry

It was the meeting before the big meeting.

It is the tradition of the Baptist World Alliance to host an entire executive committee meeting at the venue for the next Baptist World Congress, the major Baptist gathering held every five years which draws thousands of Baptists from around the world. In preparation for the next world congress, set for July 28 to August 1 in 2010, the BWA executive committee and members of other BWA subcommittees, approximately 90 in number, travelled to Hawaii for meetings in early March.

The Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu, on the island of Oahu, will be the venue for the 2010 congress, which is expected to have up to 15,000 Baptists from more than 100 countries in attendance. In addition to touring the convention center, executive committee members got a feel of what the city of Honolulu has to offer, and the possibilities for ministry prior to, during, and after the congress.

A significant decision made at the executive committee meetings, held March 3-5 at the convention center, was the approval of the logo (pictured on the cover of this magazine) expressing the theme for 2010, “Hear the Spirit.” The Hawaiian hula dancer performs the interpretive act of listening while the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descends. The Trinitarian emphasis is maintained in the logo as the “t” in “Spirit” is depicted in the form of a cross.

The approved logo is the modified version of a winning entry sent in by Dan Niel of Indonesia, in response to a worldwide contest held in 2007. The logo will be presented in a number of languages before and during the congress.

Each world congress is an opportunity for Baptists to worship, fellowship, and network on a scale not possible in other settings and on other occasions. At the core of the five days of meetings are the Bible study
sessions. The Bible study workgroup, headed by Solomon Ishola, General Secretary for the 2.5 million-member Nigerian Baptist Convention, one of the largest in Africa, is tasked with the responsibility of helping to organize the major plenary sessions and the smaller “family” Bible study groups.

The planning for the congress involves the collaboration of several groups and persons, including the Hawaiian Local Arrangements Committee, chaired by Rick Lazor, senior pastor of Nu’uanu Baptist Church in Honolulu, Hawaii; the International Program Committee, with John Upton, Executive Director for the Baptist General Association of Virginia in the USA as chair; and Emmett Dunn, BWA Director of the Youth Department who also has responsibility for the congress and all BWA conferences.

The International Program Committee consists of several workgroups. In addition to the Bible study group, these include the prayer ministry workgroup, which, as the name suggests, plans prayer events leading up to and at the congress; the music/worship workgroup that plans liturgy and worship events; the focus workgroup that explores topics for discussions at the different congress fora; and the mission in action workgroup that examines ways congress attendees can engage in mission opportunities in Hawaii, some at locations other than at the convention center.

In addition, the special events committee will plan a concert that, hopefully, will have Christians other than Baptists in attendance, as well as music festivals, lunch time speaking events, and art displays. Special youth and children’s events are also planned for the weekend during the congress.

Visual symbols will be utilized in worship, Bible study, and other sessions. The Holy Spirit will be depicted as dove, fire – a “moving flame” installation – and wind. There will be movement and dance, a photo and art exhibit on the theme, and the incorporation of songs on the Holy Spirit from around the world. Congress attendees will be exposed to Hawaiian music, Hawaiian culture, and the relationship of the theme, “Hear the Spirit,” to Aloha – the common Hawaiian greeting that has multiple meanings.

There will be visual presentations of the Spirit at creation and Pentecost, the Spirit as comforter, advocate,
During the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Baptist World Alliance in Hawaii in early March, committee members were privileged to learn more about the ministry and work of Hawaiian Baptists.

Several members preached at churches throughout the island of Oahu on the morning of Sunday, March 1. In the evening, the BWA delegates enjoyed a session with Hawaiian Baptists at the Hawaii Baptist Academy, one of the leading schools in Oahu. Presentations were made by school leaders about the work of the academy, and by the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention and Transformation Ministries on Baptist witness in Hawaii and the Pacific.

In addition to sharing a traditional Hawaiian meal, persons learned about Hawaiian culture and craft by participating in ancient Hawaiian games, lei making, and palm frond weaving. A number of participants even learned to do the hula, the traditional Hawaiian dance that has been incorporated in Baptist church worship services.

There were well received presentations by a children’s choir from South Korea; the women of Waiala’e and University Baptist Churches; the Liturgical Dance Team of the Trinity Missionary Baptist Church; and by Kaukahi, winners at the 2007 Na Hoku Hanohano awards, the main musical awards ceremony for Hawaii.

Worship was central to the meetings of the Executive Committee of the BWA. Each day meetings began and concluded with worship gatherings led by different Executive members.

The committee considered some important matters and made significant decisions during the meetings that were held March 3-5 at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu.

The next Baptist World Congress, set for Hawaii in 2010, was discussed at length by both the Executive Committee and the International Program Committee for the congress.

The Implementation Task Force, which has been working on a proposal of changes to the BWA, presented its report. While the Executive Committee did not vote on the report, committee members were given time to express views and ask questions. The report is being sent to the more than 200 BWA and intercessor, as well as of the gifts and fruit of the Spirit.

As the focus groups will explore topics of interest such as mission in multi-faith and secular societies; human trafficking and peacemaking; and the environment and trade and economic policies, the arts program will have displays that portray concerns about the environment, human rights and religious freedom, and “Hearing the cries of the poor.”

All the major sessions are to be as “international” as possible, and will incorporate the use of several languages, music from around the world, speakers representing various regions and continents, and imageries from various cultures. English, Spanish, French, Russian, Japanese, Chinese,
Korean, and various Hawaiian languages, are expected to be among the language groups for which translation will be provided and in which some sessions are to be conducted.

The BWA is expected to make full use of the convention center, including its 49 meeting rooms, the 35,000 square foot ballroom, and the 2.5 acre roof garden, which is ideal for outdoor type events. The major meeting area however, will be the massive 200,000 square foot exhibit hall, where the mass of the 15,000 Baptists are expected to gather for worship, Bible study, and other major sessions.

Hawaii, and the world, waits expectantly for 2010 to arrive.

member conventions and unions, the six regions, and all General Council members for study. The report will be voted on in Prague, Czech Republic, in July.

An offer was made to the BWA by the government of Jordan of a plot of land during a visit by BWA president David Coffey with Jordan’s King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein last September. The sight is closely approximate to the region known as Bethany beyond Jordan, where it is believed that John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ. The offer was considered by the executive committee, which decided “to proceed with feasibility conversations with the Jordan Government.”

Reports were received from the various regions, highlighting major events, activities, and developments within their continental fellowships. The Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF) aims to embrace “opportunities for renewal in our individual associations, conventions and unions” and in the CBF. The European Baptist Federation is putting plans in place for its congress in the Netherlands in 2009, which will also be used to mark the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Baptist movement.

The Union of Baptists in Latin America noted that “Latin America is ceasing to be a mission field and is becoming a missionary force oriented toward other regions of the world.” The All Africa Baptist Fellowship reported that, despite challenges, “The church in Africa is going well” and that “there is a strong effort for evangelism and church growth.”

The Asia Pacific Baptist Federation noted its change of name (previously it was the Asian Baptist Federation) “to be reflective of the inclusion and contributions of Baptists from the Pacific region.” The report stated that, “in the midst of a troubled world which seems to be veering deeper into crisis and instability, the year 2007 for us as an organization, nevertheless, has been a year of blessing and of new things.”

The North American Baptist Fellowship reported on the impact of the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant that was held in Atlanta in February, and indicated that a Summer of Jubilee is being planned as a follow up, aimed at encouraging “Baptists to collaborate and cooperate with each other in missional ministry projects.”

The meetings of the BWA Executive Committee, held in a spirit of worship and cooperation, set the tone for the next major gathering of Baptists in Prague in the Czech Republic in July.
The 70 kilometer drive from Dimapur to Kohima is treacherous; the other 67 kilometer drive between Kohima and Pfutsero is traitorous. At 9,000 feet in the air, Pfutsero is breathtaking – in more ways than one – with scenery few Westerners get the privilege of seeing. Few Westerners visit Pfutsero, not only because of the distance and mountainous terrain and treacherous travel on a largely unpaved, pothole-ridden, narrow, winding road bedeviled by plunging precipices, massively deep ravines, and numerous breakaways, (matched only by the intrepid cavalier gutsiness of the drivers), but because the government of India does not make it easy for foreigners to travel to Nagaland.

Nagaland is one of eight northeastern states in India, and is in perpetual conflict. Indian leaders, beginning with Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, ignored or rejected a promise that Mahatma Gandhi allegedly made to the Naga people that Nagaland would be granted independence. Regarded by those in the know as one of the most complex conflicts in the modern world, Naga militant groups have broken into three factions that previously engaged the Indian army, but now viciously attack each other in pitched guerilla battles and other various forms of violent attacks.

Any foreigner who enters Nagaland must be granted a special government permit that specifies where that person may travel and for how long, as it is alleged that foreigners help to feed the conflict in the state. Anyone who violates these restrictions, if fortunate enough to be allowed into Nagaland in the first place, is immediately sent to a government jail. The risk lies not only in being sent to a government lockup. The foreigner who strays outside of designated travel times and areas, even in any of the cities in Nagaland, such as Dimapur, the commercial and business capital of the state, and Kohima, the government and administrative capital, risks being kidnapped by one of the Naga factions.

But once there, Pfutsero, and its people, are a beauty, as is Kohima. Even with bitingly cold weather, especially at night, the warmth of the Nagas of Kohima and Pfutsero makes the journey worthwhile.

A Baptist World Alliance team, led by General Secretary Neville Callam, and which included BWA directors Emmett Dunn and Eron Henry, Australians Robyn Corr and Keryn Tole, and Americans Roy and Lynda O’Bryan, braved the journey to the Baptist Theological College (BTC) in Pfutsero in December 2007.

The Chakesang Baptist Church Council has planted more than 340 churches... and has more than 80 missionaries and evangelists in the field.
It was a trip worth taking, for all its hazards. There, nestled in the mountains, is a school that provides theological education and ministerial training to 21 tribal communities, such as the Ao, Angami, and Chakesang, some of the Naga tribes based in Nagaland, as well as kin from Myanmar who cross the border on foot, taking a one week journey to the school through the mountains and jungle. Students from Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh have attended the school. Special efforts are made to reach out to Nagas and other tribal groups in other Indian states such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Tripura, recruiting students from these states for training.

Run by the Chakesang Baptist Church Council (CBCC), one of the 20 mainly tribal church councils that form the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, BTC is one of several mission endeavors of CBCC.

In addition to the theological college, the mission arm of CBCC runs a high school in Pfutsero, a town of 10,000, and an academy in collaboration with a South Korean Baptist congregation.

But it is the Chakesangs’ mission outreach in other Indian states that defines the mission objectives of CBCC. In total, CBCC has planted more than 340 churches in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, and has more than 80 missionaries and evangelists in the field. Graduates of BTC are serving in Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand, and in different parts of India. A number are now leaders in several church conventions and unions in India.

BTC declares that it “has a burden to evangelize people of neighboring states and countries.”

The women’s auxiliary of CBCC has programs in place specially aimed at women and children. As women “are the poorest,” especially widows who are left with no property, the aim is to lift their economic status. Self help groups of 10 to 15 women each are formed, monies lent to the groups, and the resources are used to finance the construction of houses and to educate children.

Education is a major thrust of the women’s auxiliary. The group conducts “mother education” in 30 villages to enable women to read and write. Since 2004, the Baptist women started an “alternative education program,” with help from the government. More than 700 children benefit from the program, many of whom are school dropouts or who did not attend school before. Beginning in 2006, the women created a preschool program in which more than 30 children are now enrolled.

As there is a lack of health centers in Nagaland, the Baptist women recruit volunteers to go to the various villages, house to house, to educate mothers on their and their children’s health, and to encourage the women to visit clinics and hospitals for prenatal care and for childbirth. Traditionally, birthing takes place within the homes in most rural villages in Nagaland. The volunteers also encourage women to manage the number of children they have by adopting family planning methods.

The Chakesang Baptists show why more than 90 percent of Nagas are Christians and why an estimated 85 percent of Naga Christians are Baptists. As it prepares to celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2010, CBCC, like all the 20 local councils that are part of the statewide Nagaland Baptist Church Council, has placed time, effort, and resources into the mission of the church, which has led to phenomenal growth.
“Are you a Christian?” the woman who was just sleeping on the side of the street asked.

“Why did you ask me if I am a Christian?” came the surprised response.

“Because only Christians ever pay attention to people like us.”

That brief conversation took place during one particularly cold night. Leena Lavanya Kumari was returning from a Baptist World Alliance-sponsored worship conference in the city of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh state in South India, and saw the woman asleep on the sidewalk, cold and shivering, and without a blanket. Leena, as everyone calls her, took off her shawl and placed it over the woman, who was startled by the generosity.

Some call Leena the “Baptist Mother Teresa.” Her Serve Trust organization exercises an astounding number of ministries on what, by western standards, would be regarded as a shoe string budget.

From her base in Narasaraopet, a town of approximately 100,000, five hours by road from Hyderabad, Leena takes care of HIV/AIDS patients, adults and children alike; runs a school in one of the worst slums in the town; trains prostitutes and their female children to learn other skills; operates a computer training school, specially targeting females and the poor; founded a home for the aged and destitute; runs another facility for those suffering from leprosy; and hands out food and blankets to Hindu beggars. In addition, Leena’s organization has founded more than 30 Baptist congregations.

Seeing Leena at work, one is tempted to conclude that she is trying to swim against the current, due to India’s caste system that guarantees millions will continue to live in poverty, and suffer the consequences of poverty, even as the country thrives economically. Her work in Chilakaluripet, another town with a remarkable history, is instructive.
Chilakaluripet reportedly means “the place where prostitutes live,” and is populated by descendants of women who were once concubines of kings. Eventually, these descendants evolved into a caste where their role and function is prostitution. The men either become pimps, “mafia,” or simply live on the earnings of the women.

Leena opened a training school in Chilakaluripet in a former brothel, teaching the women how to make paper plates that are used at weddings, and young girls learn embroidery and sewing skills. One of the women died of AIDS, leaving three daughters. Because the female sex worker owed money to the mafia, they laid claim to her three daughters as payment, one 14, one 12, and the other nine. The oldest girl would immediately be placed as a prostitute to help pay the mother’s debt. Leena, whose acts of compassion often trump reason, rescued the three girls and spirited them out of the town and placed them in what she thought was a safe place. In dramatic fashion, the mafia found the girls and threatened to take them by force. Again, swift action by Leena averted the danger and saved the girls, at least for the moment, from a life consistent with their mother’s and forbears’.

Getting the women of Chilakaluripet to change their lifestyle is not easy. “What do you expect us to do? This is what we were born to do,” the women tell Leena.

Getting others to embrace Leena’s ministries is not easy either. Her Indian critics either regard it as a waste (“Why spend time and money on people with AIDS as they will die anyway?”); or as helping those whose suffering is as a result of their lifestyle choices. Matters are not helped that, as a female, Leena’s work does not exactly conform to the role of Telugu women, the people group to which she belongs.

Caring for AIDS patients is especially stressful. Most are abandoned by relatives and even thrown out of their villages after their condition becomes known. Hospitals do not want to care for them. When they die, funeral homes do not want the corpses. Cemetery administrators do not want them buried on their grounds. Because of this, Leena opened a hospice, and was able to secure her own burial ground for AIDS patients. When a male AIDS patient dies, only one of her male assistants is willing to dress the body for burial. When a female patient dies, Leena does it herself. All this while counseling the other patients who often slump into depression when one of their number in the hospice dies.

What sustains Leena is her unshakable Christian conviction. Never without a smile, she seems to lack the capacity to get angry. Going nonstop, she puts in days that begin in the dark of predawn and goes into the dark of night, often ending the day at one of her churches in one of the remote villages.

The support of her family is of inestimable worth. Her father, a magistrate, not only gives support but sits on the board of Serve Trust. One sister and her husband work full time for the trust, free of cost. Her cousin is the full time administrator.

Leena’s Baptist roots run deep. Her maternal grandfather, B.R. Moses, was a BWA vice president and seminary professor who raised Leena, in accordance with a Telugu tradition of grandparents raising the oldest grandchild. Her fraternal aunt, now deceased, was a Baptist women’s leader and sat on several BWA commissions. Her maternal uncle, B.M. Sudheer, is a pastor and a member of the BWA Freedom and Justice Commission. A fraternal uncle is a pastor of one of the churches that falls under her ministry.

Leena knew exactly what direction she wanted her life to take when she left the Baptist World Alliance Youth Conference in Zimbabwe in 1993. Challenged by a sermon by noted speaker and author Tony Campolo for young people to truly and fully surrender all for Christ, Leena left the event determined to do just that. That decision has led, over the past 15 years, to a fast growing ministry that has spread way beyond what she originally dreamt.

What motivates Leena is a desire to express the love of Christ. The following relates how she began 2008.

“On New Year’s night my family distributed blankets to the poor people who sleep on the roadside. I was so moved, seeing and observing their life. During the night, a police patrol saw us while we were distributing the blankets. “This morning, one policeman came to my dad’s house with his family and asked my dad to pray and bless his family .The policeman doesn’t know about Jesus. He had asked his friends why we were giving blankets to the poor. His friends told him that my dad is a Christian and so my dad was showing God’s love through distributing the blankets. The policeman asked many questions about Jesus and his love. We talked to the family, prayed for them, and gave them a Bible.”

Left: A Serve Trust sign.
Bottom: Some of the women being helped by Leena.

BW
Approximately 500 registered delegates attended the Living Water conference in Nagaland in Northeast India from December 13 to 16. The meetings were hosted at the 6,000-member Ao Baptist Church in Dimapur, the business and commercial capital of Nagaland.

Of the 500 delegates, almost half were leaders of the various Baptist associations in Nagaland, generally defined by their tribal identity. The other participants were from various Indian states plus those countries contiguous to India, commonly known as part of the Indian sub-continent. People traveled from countries such as Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan; as well as from other Indian cities and states such as Delhi, Kerala, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunahal Pradesh. One dedicated couple travelled for 47 hours each way by train to attend the conference.

The twin emphases of the Living Water conference, evangelism and leadership, were constantly highlighted through the thoughtful and challenging messages of US pastor, Ronald Bobo and BWA President David Coffey; major papers and testimonies; and in the many focus groups.

A regular and popular feature of Living Water conferences are affinity groups where people with expertise and interest in particular vocations or disciplines come together to learn from each other. Among the affinity groups were theological education, mission, women, denominational leadership, music and worship, children’s ministry and emerging leaders.

BWA President Coffey, General Secretary Neville Callam, and directors Fausto Vasconcelos and Emmett Dunn, contributed to the Living Water conference in Nagaland as did Chu Wood-Ping, president of the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF), and Bonny Resu, APBF general secretary. Other contingents came from the United States, Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

All evening sessions were open to local Baptists, with an estimated 3,500 worshippers gathering for the final session.

This is the fifth major Living Water event planned by the BWA. Previous conferences were held in Russia, Brazil, Kenya, and Thailand.

Left: A delegate leads a session during the Living Water conference. Below: Delegates gather in the Ao Baptist Church in a plenary session.
Much of Northeast India is, by most measures, a Baptist heartland. At least three of the “Seven Sister States,” so-called because they are contiguous, have significant Baptist populations that are higher in concentration than in most other countries, regions or territories in the world.

An eighth state, Sikkim, and parts of West Bengal complete the Northeast region, often referred to as the chicken’s neck due to its crooked shape and location in the top right corner of India. Most residents of Northeast India are ethnically related to East Asians, such as the Chinese, Japanese and the Koreans.

The organization of Baptist life in the Indian Northeast is both concentrated and diffused. Five of the states have their own statewide Baptist church council. Assam has two Baptist conventions that operate independently of each other, the Assam Baptist Convention and the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention, as is the case with Meghalaya state, which is home to the Arunachal Baptist Convention and the Garo Baptist Convention of India.

Some of the state church councils and conventions are further divided into local church councils, some of which, such as in Nagaland, are largely along tribal lines.

The state church councils and conventions come together to form the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI). Under this grouping, the umbrella organization runs supplementary ministries to those provided by the state church councils and conventions, and the smaller, local church councils.

The ministries of CBCNEI include the operation of three hostels, mainly for college students; Eastern Theological College, the largest of its kind in the Indian Northeast with more than 300 students; and six hospitals.

Other areas of concentration for CBCNEI are relief and development, HIV/AIDS ministry, women and youth development, and peace building.

Peace building has become an important area of ministry, due to the fractious history of the Indian Northeast in relation to political India. Several movements have arisen in some Northeastern states that agitate and fight for independence from India, or at minimum, for greater levels of autonomy. These include the United Liberation Front of Asom, a militant group in Assam state; the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland, which has broken into at least two rival and opposing factions; and the National Liberation Front of Tripura, which has endured several splits since its formation in 1989.

According to J.M. Ngul Khan Pau, General Secretary, CBCNEI intends to “build awareness to prevent violence and attacks,” and to try to detect “hot spot signals.”

“Fighting has ceased in places where peace brokering has taken place,” as the church “has played a neutral role in the conflicts,” and has been “prophetic in its rejection of violence,” Pau says. “Lots of prayer meetings for peace” are held, and a booklet on peace was published.

Baptists have been caught up in the conflicts. On August 20, 2006, S. Thawngkhanlian, 35, the chairman of the local Baptist youth fellowship and editor for a local weekly paper, was killed when government forces fired upon a church in Vengnuam, New Lamka in Manipur state, during Holy Communion. It was alleged that a team of Indian security forces, without apparent provocation, sprayed the building with bullets in what some interpreted as “a guise of combating insurgency,” even though the church denied nurturing or harboring “underground elements.” The same congregation had been attacked on June 1, 2004, when youth choir members were allegedly tortured by the combined forces of the Bishnupur Police Commando and the Indian Reserve Battalion.

These events do not detract CBCNEI from what it regards as its core ministries, which includes the building of leadership among its ranks. To do this, it offers recognition to eight theological colleges in the different states in the region in addition to its own school, Eastern Theological College. These institutions offer theological education and ministerial training to persons who will become pastors, missionaries, and church leaders. CBCNEI offers 20 to 50 scholarships per year to theological students. The regional Baptist body also provides two-week pastoral training and refresher courses to pastors who are already in the field.

The hope, Pau says, is that, with emphasis on leadership building and mission work, Baptist membership in Northeast India will increase from the current 936,000 to one million in 2010.
Baptists in Orissa

A Struggle for Identity

Baptists have had a long history in Orissa, an eastern state in India. But for Baptists in the religiously sensitive state of more than 36 million people, they have had to overcome a crisis of identity.

This identity crisis came to a head in the early 1970s, as passionately told by Swarupananda Patra, a scientist, civil servant, educator, former UNESCO employee, media director and television administrator – and a Baptist to the core.

Patra is eminently qualified to speak, as passionately as he does, on Baptist issues in Orissa. He is vice president of the Orissa Baptist Evangelistic Crusade (OBEC), a member body of the Baptist World Alliance that has 3,300 churches with 430,000 members and 2,300 pastors; vice president of the Uktal Christian Church Central Council (UCCCC), which, in its current form, deals with legal issues and is a government liaison body, but was essentially replaced by OBEC (for reasons that will become clearer in this article); and General Secretary of the All Orissa Baptist Churches Federation (AOCBF), which he describes as “the apex body” that groups OBEC, UCCCC, and the united theological college in the state. AOCBF, Patra says, “fosters activities and nurtures churches.”

The crisis developed over an attempt to replicate an earlier experiment. The Church of South India (CSI), a new church formed out of several Protestant Christian churches, was founded in 1947, inspired by the words of Christ, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). The apparent success of this experiment led to an attempt to form a similar group in the northern part of the country.

Main participants in the attempt to form a united church in the north included the Baptists, Methodists and Anglicans. Things started falling apart, Patra contends, when there was a name change for the proposed body. The original intent in 1968, when the matter was first discussed seriously, he claims, was to form the United Churches of North India, implying that though one body, the churches from the various denominations would nevertheless maintain their distinct identity.

“Instead, in 1970 in Nagpur, they decided to form the Church of North India,” which, Patra alleges, was being “controlled by Anglicans.”

The uproar over the name change led to a pullout by the Methodists. UCCCC, formed in 1933, and which was the Baptist union at the time, pulled out as well. Though most of the “major” Baptist churches followed UCCCC’s lead, other Baptist congregations did not. Joining the Church of North India (CNI) was attractive for some pastors and congregations as pastors were paid directly by CNI, rather than by the congregation, as happened under UCCCC. Many of these congregations were poor and in impoverished locations. “Suddenly, Baptist pastors were made bishops,” Patra laments.

The new CNI laid claim to all the properties held by the UCCCC and its member churches. To complicate matters, some of the Baptist lands and other properties were held in trust by the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), the British missionary arm that did mission work in India. Patra notes disappointing that “BMS took a hands off approach” and was even selling some of the properties that were held in trust.

The matter went to litigation. As part of its legal argument, Patra reports, CNI claimed that “there are no Baptists in Orissa.” UCCCC, on the other hand, insisted that there were Baptists in the state. In the end, in 1978, the courts ruled that there are indeed Baptists in Orissa state, paving the way for Baptists to have legal status and ownership of their properties.

As an attempt to distance the churches from the litigation process in which UCCCC was involved, OBEC, which was formed in 1969 to do evangelistic work, eventually became the union to which the churches belong.

Now, OBEC has grown, despite restrictions on Christian churches by the Orissa state government. Due to the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, there can be no conversion of Hindus or Muslims to Christianity without government approval, “which will never come,” Patra asserts. Additionally, the state government declared that “priests” cannot perform baptismal rites.
Several Christians were killed and a number of churches and homes burnt by Hindu militants in Orissa state in eastern India.

The incidents, which began on December 23 and lasted for several days, reportedly left an estimated 10 Christians dead, close to 100 churches burned, including 11 Baptist churches, and several hundred homes torched.

On December 23, “Fifty to 70 Hindu radicals pulled out Pastor Junas Digal from a parked bus, paraded him on the road, all the way beating him with sticks and hands, and finally shaved his head to claim him a Hindu,” Swarupananda Patra, General Secretary of the All Orissa Baptist Churches Federation, reported to the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

Patra further reported that on Christmas Day, Christians were terrorized, Christmas worship services were disrupted and churches were forced to close, and Christians hid in “forests to evade attacks from these Hindus.”

The attacks, which affected approximately 5,000 Christians, leaving most homeless, were allegedly the work of Vishwa Hindu Parishad or the World Hindu Council.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam condemned the attacks and urged Christians, especially Baptists, to remember “our Christian brothers and sisters in Orissa state in our prayers.” Callam further indicated that the BWA “will respond meaningfully to the needs and concerns of those who have suffered and will make the appropriate representations to make the case for respect for religious freedom in India.”

Baptists in other parts of India responded to aid those who suffered from the violence. Bonny Resu, General Secretary for the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation and BWA Regional Secretary for Asia, reported that local Indian churches mobilized to offer assistance, such as the provision of blankets.

Resu indicated that the level and speed of assistance was tempered by the sensitivity of the situation as overt assistance from Christian organizations, even from within India, could spark further violence. “Orissa is a place where a Baptist community of about 500,000 live and most of them are in these areas where persecution is most intense. They are also among the poorest of the poor of India, which is why they are often voiceless,” said Resu, who is from Nagaland in Northeast India.

The BWA leader for the Asian continent also requested that “if at all possible a word of concern needs to be lodged at international fora to urge the government of India to do more to safeguard its religious minorities… who have become increasingly targeted, and to ensure freedom of religion as enshrined in its constitution. As the most populous democracy in the world, India owes it to the international community to show an example.”

India’s Christian population is estimated at 3.5 percent of a total 1.12 billion people.

Violent anti-Christian attacks are not new to Orissa. In January 1999, Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons were burnt to death as they slept in their car in Manoharpur village, Keonjhar District, in rural Orissa.

There are several Baptist conventions and unions in Orissa state that are member bodies of the BWA, with total membership in Orissa of nearly 500,000 baptized believers and approximately 3,500 churches.
The fate and future of the Gaza Baptist Church in Palestine hangs in the balance. After Rami Ayyad, a member of the church and the manager for the Bible Society bookstore was killed last October, seven Baptist families fled to the West Bank, including that of its pastor, Hanna Massad.

The recent upsurge in fighting between Israeli security forces and Hamas, which controls the Palestinian National Authority, has made worse what was already a bad situation. Conditions in the West Bank are nearly as tenuous as those in Gaza.

It was to determine the fate of the Christian church in general, and of Baptists in particular, that a team of Baptist leaders visited Israel and Palestine in February. The delegation from the European Baptist Federation (EBF), one of six continental federations that are part of the Baptist World Alliance, and which has oversight responsibility for the Middle East, met with pastors and churches from Israel, the West Bank and Gaza in order to give support, and to explore ways of strengthening relationships between churches in Israel and Palestine and the EBF.

The testimonies of pastors and other residents in Palestine tell of grief, suffering, and pain. “It is like living in a huge jail with the sky as the roof,” one of the pastors from the West Bank told the EBF team, which was led by Toma Magda, president, and Tony Peck, general secretary.

“There are restrictions on people’s lives. They feel like their lives are being squeezed out of them,” Peck reported. “I have never seen anything like this,” Magda, who is from Croatia, said.

The most humiliating experiences for Palestinian residents, Magda asserted, were at the border checkpoints between Israel and Palestine. In the West Bank, there are some 600 checkpoints. For Peck, one of the most moving realities was the security wall being built on the Israeli-Palestinian border and its effects on the people on both sides of the high fence.

Pastors in Palestine cannot cross the border into Israel. The EBF is therefore making representations for Palestinian pastors, the majority of whom are Arabs, to get travel permits in order to be able to go Israel. The EBF team, which included Anna Maffei from Italy, Regina Claas from Germany, and Graham Sparkes from Britain, met with an Arabian Christian parliamentarian in the Israeli Knesset, who has also promised to try to get recognition for Christians, churches, and Christian schools that are in Israel.

BWA president David Coffey also expressed his concern that Palestinian pastors living in the West Bank are not allowed to travel to Jerusalem or other parts of Israel without permits. While on a trip to Israel in September 2007, the BWA leader told Israeli President and former Prime Minister Shimon Perez, “I am disturbed to discover that pastors have had difficulty in gaining permission” to visit Israel. “None of the pastors I am representing has ever been allowed to go to Jerusalem” without permits. The EBF team met with the parliamentarian, who promised to try to get recognition for Christians, churches, and Christian schools that are in Israel.

Top: The security wall built between Israel and the West Bank.

Left: The EBF team with Israeli pastors and Israeli Knesset parliamentarian Nadia Helo.
Dennis Dilip Datta

is the 2008 recipient of the Baptist World Alliance Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award.

Datta, a Baptist leader from the Muslim-majority country of Bangladesh, is being recognized for his advocacy for Bangladesh independence, the restoration of democracy, and the establishment of religious freedom in his country.

As founding general secretary and current president of the National Christian Fellowship of Bangladesh, which takes special interest in human rights causes, Datta became the spokesman “for the churches to the government of Bangladesh” and has “worked very closely with all the churches of Bangladesh” against laws enacted “by the government of Bangladesh to control the ministry and activities of the churches.”

The author of several books on human rights and religious freedom, including “Strength to Endure” and “Government Decision: Churches Reaction,” is described as someone always ready to stand up for freedom’s cause. “Whenever and wherever in Bangladesh religious persecution and human rights (are) violated for minorities… he always stands with the persecuted.”

In addition, the former president and general secretary of the Bangladesh Baptist Fellowship has been involved in several social ministries, including in health, education, the environment, relief, and microfinance.

Datta became an active BWA participant in 1976, and has served on the General Council and as a member of the Commission on Freedom and Justice and the Communications Committee.

The annual human rights award, named after former BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz and his wife Janice, will be presented to Datta during the General Council meeting to be held in Prague, in the Czech Republic, in July of this year.

The award is given “for significant and effective activities to secure, protect, restore or preserve human rights as they are stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

The 2007 recipients were Joao and Nora Matwawana from Angola who played a pivotal role in reconciliation and peace efforts in Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Angola beginning in the 1970s.
Karen Women Struggle for Rights & Freedom

She was one of the driving forces behind _State of Terror_, the 2007 seminal report by the Karen Women’s Organization (KWO) on the condition of women among the Karen, a people group living mainly in Thailand and Myanmar.

Naw Blooming Night Zahn has been an activist with the women’s group that seeks to bring to the world’s attention the systematic abuse – such as rape – that has been visited upon the Karen by the military regime in Myanmar, which was renamed in 1989.

Appearing at the New Baptist Covenant, held January 31 to February 2 in Atlanta, Zahn told those assembled, “I bring greetings to you from refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), migrant workers, the Karen Women’s Organization and Karen Baptist churches from Burma, Thai-Burma and refugee camps.”

In that one sentence, the activist summarized not only the groups she represents, but the state of her people. Tens of thousands of Karen live in refugee camps on the Thai-Burmese border, having fled ethnic and religious repression in Myanmar. Thousands more are forcibly displaced from their homes within Myanmar itself, many coerced into serving as workers far away from home. The majority are Baptists.

Her report on the atrocities is sententious. “Shoot on sight; extortion; destruction of villages and communities; detention; torture; execution; forced labor; forced relocation; rape; other forms of violence against women,” she lists as examples of “systematic terrorizing of ethnic minority civilians” by the military regime in Myanmar.

Perceptively, the KWO leader stated that when women suffer, children suffer as well. The contrast is also true. When women are helped, children are helped.

The KWO, a community based organization, was formed in 1949 and now has a membership of more than 30,000 women. Its membership, mostly consisting of Karen women, works in relief and development in the refugee camps, such as the Mae La camp on the Thai border, and with IDPs and women inside Myanmar.

“State of Terror” cites more than 950 cases of human rights abuses against Karen women and girls, and more than 3,100 other cases that were not disaggregated by age or gender but are suspected of including significant numbers of women and children.

An excerpt reads, “Karen women and children continue to be killed and raped by SPDC (Myanmar government) soldiers, are subjected to forced labor, including portering, and are displaced from their homes. In the first half of 2006 alone KWO received reports of almost 5,000 villagers being taken as forced laborers, with over five times that many being forcibly relocated from their villages as their farms, homes and rice paddies were burned. As a consequence, increasing numbers...”
North Americans Celebrate Unity

The who’s who of North American Baptist leaders all turned out:

denominational presidents, executive directors and general secretaries; Baptist professors and seminary and divinity school leaders; well known authors and speakers.

Other big hitters were there: Former United States presidents, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton; former Vice President Al Gore; Republican Senator Charles Grassley; David Satcher, former Surgeon General of the United States; and John Grisham, famous American novelist.

It was three days of a unique Baptist gathering – geographically, ethnically, and theologically – at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

The Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant was held January 30 to February 1 to reaffirm “traditional Baptist values, including sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and its implications for public and private morality.”

The event brought together more than 30 Baptist conventions, unions, universities and parachurch organizations. All four historically African American groups were there – the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., the National Baptist Convention of America, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America – along with American Baptist Churches USA, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the General Association of General Baptists, Canadian Baptist Ministries, and others.

The various speakers challenged the audiences. Tony Campolo made a stab at the North American conscience.

“There’s nothing wrong with making a million dollars,” Campolo said, “but there’s something wrong with keeping it.” In throwing a dagger from the pulpit, he admonished, “The Jesus of scripture challenges us to live radical lives not in conformity with the culture around us,” and, “We have to challenge people not to commit to a consumerist lifestyle.”

William Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention USA, provoked the conscience. “You cannot be involved in the mission of Jesus without confronting the reality of justice,” the leader of the largest African American church group in the United States said. “Justice says that we should change the structures of victimization.”

Marian Wright Edelman reeled off dizzying amounts of statistics to show that not enough is being done on the behalf of children. “The test of the morality of a nation is how it treats its children,” she quoted the famous German theologian and anti-Nazi leader Dietrich Bonhoeffer. “We

(Continued on next page)
are what’s wrong with our children,” the founder of the Children’s Defense Fund said. She stated that in the United States, “The most dangerous place for a child to be born is at the intersection of race and poverty,” but “God did not make two classes of children,” she said. “The church ought to be the locomotive...that speaks up for the children.”

Al Gore was a big hit, and left an indelible mark. “If we heap contempt on creation, that is inconsistent with glorifying God,” the Nobel Peace Prize and Academy Award winner told a packed, sold out luncheon of 2,500. His presentation on global warming and its effects on planet earth drew a rapturous standing ovation and questions on “What can we do to stop the destruction of our planet?”

President Carter decried disunity among Baptists. “Divisions among Baptists are like a cancer that has metastasized in the body of Christ,” the 1995 recipient of the Baptist World Alliance Human Rights Award said. Grisham echoed this theme, saying, “So many Baptists have worked so hard to exclude so many,” arguing that “we must truly respect diversity.”

Baptists in North America, most notably in the United States, have grown weary of divisions and disunity, and hence, the New Covenant Celebration was a coming together to “speak and work together to create an authentic and genuine prophetic Baptist voice in North America.” The focus was on fulfilling Jesus’ mandate, as expressed in Luke 4:18, 19, “to promote peace with justice, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, care for the sick and the marginalized, and promote religious liberty and respect for religious diversity.”

The young came. More than 80 students from about 16 colleges, seminars, and universities participated as volunteers and shared in worship. The Mercer University Children’s choir sang, as did the Morehouse College Glee Club choir.

Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary Neville Callam has called on African American Baptists and churches to become more engaged in the mission of the BWA.

“Let us make no mistake about it: an urgent need exists for African American Baptists ... to contribute to Baptists’ emerging understanding of their role in the realization of God’s mission in the world,” said Callam, who was speaking during the 2nd Historic Joint Winter Board Meeting of the National Baptist Conventions in America on Wednesday, January 30.

The BWA leader acknowledged that “some churches are already doing this,” but stated that “many more need to.”

Naw Blooming Night Zahn from Myanmar and Hanna Massad from Gaza in Palestine, who has fled to the West Bank for security reasons, were brought specially to the United States to share testimonies of the difficulties and tragedies they and their people face, and the hope that they still have in God.

Small group presenters sought to engage Baptists in the concerns of their country and the world by considering, “Breaking the cycles of poverty,” “Engaging the criminal justice system,” “Faith and public policy,” “Sexual exploitation,” “Race as a continuing challenge,” and the “HIV/AIDS pandemic.”

Questions were being asked in group sessions, “How should faith guide us in speaking to power about the poor, sick, and the oppressed?” Because wars and conflicts exist, “How can churches and people be
Dear Paul,

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Baptist World Aid and yourself for the intense efforts and genuine concern regarding the situation that arose with the outbreak of yellow fever in Paraguay. We had a significant death toll, and we have suffered a lack of vaccines to immunize our population. Thankfully, the government secured two million vaccines from the World Health Organization, and these vaccines will be made available to the country the day after tomorrow. I consulted with our brethren at the Baptist Medical Center in Asunción, and their best judgment is that this recent shipment of vaccines secured by the government is sufficient for the time being, and therefore no further vaccines will be needed.

Raúl Scialabba [former Vice President of the Baptist World Alliance] told me of your tireless contacts seeking to secure vaccines for our country, and the care manifested by you, your colleagues in BWAid and many other fellow Christians. This is humbling, and for us is a token of God’s care and provision. Please keep the people of Paraguay in your prayers, that God might grant us deliverance from this outbreak and from our present troubles. Once again, thank you so much. You and BWAid made a difference.

With my strongest embrace,
Osvaldo A. Simari

February 25, 2008

The importance of this fact is hard to overstate.”

Callam declared that this is “the sort of contribution that you are uniquely prepared to place on the table” because “most people on this planet, including Baptists, are living in situations in which they yearn for liberation from bondage based on gender, race, class and other such factors.”

Callam urged “African American Baptists to take their place intentionally… in the international Baptist movement, expressed through the Baptist World Alliance.”

The Joint Winter Board Meeting, held at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, brought together the four predominantly African American Baptist groups: National Baptist Convention USA, National Baptist Convention of America, Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America.

The first of the joint meetings was held in 2004 in the city of Philadelphia. forces for peace in our world?” Because poverty devastates people, “How can we enable systemic change and personal empowerment?” “How should Baptists attack the problem of sexual exploitation?” Because race has been used as an excuse for division, “How can we move forward to address personal racial prejudices and redress institutional injustices?” And “How can we relate to and be neighbors with persons of other faiths while still holding firm to our basic belief in the redeeming power of Jesus Christ?”

At the end of the covenant celebration, the question was asked, “Is this a moment or is it a movement?”

The hunger for a new kind of spirit and a new way of doing things has spurred North American Baptists to explore avenues of greater collaboration and closer cooperation. The Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant, with its theme, “Unity in Christ,” may serve as the catalyst.
In Memoriam

Daniel T.K. Baroi

Daniel T.K. Baroi, director of the Social Health and Education Development (SHED) Board of the Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha (BBCS), a member body of the Baptist World Alliance, died on January 28 at the age of 55.

Involved in relief and development work in Bangladesh throughout his life, Baroi had a role in many economic, health, agricultural and other social welfare projects through organizations such as the National Council of Churches, Save the Children, and the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh.

Baroi became director of the SHED Board in 2001, and served in that capacity until his death. The SHED Board, the development wing of BBCS, seeks to improve socio-economic conditions of underprivileged people, provide community healthcare, provide education, and assist persons affected by natural disasters.

The funeral service for Baroi was held at Amboila Baptist Church on January 29, and was attended by thousands of people from different religions. The SHED Board arranged a prayer meeting on February 7 in remembrance of Baroi’s contribution to the SHED Board and to the churches of the BBCS.

Baroi is survived by his wife, a daughter and son, and two brothers and two sisters.

O. Judith Chambers


During her tenure as president, NABWU, one of seven continental unions that belong to the Women’s Department of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), upgraded its communications area, sought a deeper understanding of relationships across cultures, enlisted young women on the NABWU Young Adult Committee, and focused on leadership training, among other initiatives.

Chambers was active in other areas of the BWA, serving as a member of the General Council as well as the Memorial Committee and the Commission on Freedom and Justice.

A public educator for more than thirty years, upon retirement Chambers became the Executive Director of the United Baptist Woman’s Missionary Union of Atlantic Canada from 1995-1999. Throughout her life, she travelled extensively around the world doing volunteer mission work, teaching, conducting workshops, and speaking at churches.

Funeral services were held on April 5 in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island in Canada.

Chambers is survived by her daughter, Constance Robinson.

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

**In Honor Of**

- by Mrs. Rae E. Whitney in honor of the family of Paul Montacute
- by Mrs. Marion Hickerson in honor of Denton and Janice Lotz
- by Carolyn Woitas in honor of Mrs. Elsie Reeves, Mrs. Marcia Howell, Mr. William Howell, Mr. Greg Howell & Mr. Rod Howell  
  by Carolina Mangieri in honor of Julie Justus,  
  Lore Lynch & Lauren Weaver
- by Rebecca Taurisano in honor of Peter and Kathe Traynham
- by Don McChesney in honor of Grady and Cleo Cothen

**For the India Famine Fund:**

by Michael & Vivian Clingenpeel  
 in honor of staff members at River Road Church, Baptist, Richmond, VA: Robert L. Dibble, E. Carl Freeman, Barbara J. Massey, Rachel L. Hoffman, Ka’thy Gore Chappell, Martha Ann Gallahan, Kenneth E. Lantz, Jr., Sandra L. Bassett, Margaret Darby & Steve Harmon

**For the BWAid AIDS Fund:**

by Mt. Zion Baptist Church, New Canton, VA

**For the BWAid Projects Fund:**

by Michael, Jessica, Addison & Ashleigh Aycock in honor of: Nancy Aycock, Carolyn McRobie, Philip McRobie, Sr., Charles Aycock, Kay Aycock, Ricky McRobie, Krystal McRobie, April McRobie, Philip McRobie, Jr., Kevin Caldwell, Jane Caldwell, Renee Sorrells, Jeff Sorrells, David & Vanessa Hawes, & Dr. Jim Pruett

**To the Baptist World Aid Hunger Fund:**

in honor of Mr. Dwight Gladfelter  
by Charles & Kathleen Parker & Marilois Kirksey  
in honor of Rev. Fred Thompson  
by First Baptist Church, Maiden, NC

**In Memory Of**

Mrs. S. J. Morris in memory of Rev. S. Jasper Morris, Jr.

**For BWAid:**

by Col (USA-Ret) & Mrs. Lauris M. Eek, Jr.  
in memory of Thelma Bentley Wilkins
Appeal to Baptist Theologians

What are the structures that would appropriately serve the Baptist movement in its worldwide ministry? This is the question that lies behind the report prepared by the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Implementation Task Force, which is being widely circulated and discussed by member bodies of the BWA.

One reason why the question we pose is challenging is that the various BWA member bodies, and the regional groupings with which they affiliate, do not appear to hold identical theological understandings of national, regional or worldwide Baptist identity. One indicator of this is the nomenclature of the BWA regional bodies.

In the Caribbean, Africa and North America, the regional groupings conceive of themselves in terms of *koinonia*, fellowship. The Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, the All Africa Baptist Fellowship and the North American Baptist Fellowship appear to attach to their self-understanding both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Vertically, the members of churches within the Fellowship are incorporated into Christ. Horizontally, they relate to each other because of their common incorporation into Christ as perceived through the lens of Baptist understanding. This leads to an understanding of their relationship with the BWA that may be described as organic.

In Latin America, the corporate Baptist grouping takes the name *Union Bautista Latinoamericana* (UBLA). While union shares with fellowship the notion of incorporation, it actually points to an even stronger linkage between the entities so joined and in their relationship with the BWA. The perception is that the bond is almost indivisible.

The nomenclature adopted by Europe and Asia/Pacific conveys a distinct interpretation of the relationship shared among their members and with the BWA. In choosing to name themselves in terms of a federal relationship, the European Baptist Federation and the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation express their identity as autonomous entities voluntarily cooperating in a federation. This way they have emphasized independency more than fellowship, strategic collaboration in particular tasks more than united action proceeding from the wellspring of a common identity in Christ.

When churches join the BWA, they are likely to enter the family with assumptions that are dominant in their regions concerning how Baptists relate to one another. It should not surprise anyone, therefore, if these member bodies adopt different attitudes to the role that structures play in the service of both their own entities and also in the worldwide Baptist movement.

Distinct approaches adopted by ecclesial bodies, such as the BWA and its regional bodies, are not backward because they fail to adopt contemporary secular management theory, nor are they enlightened simply because they have adopted such theories. Such distinct approaches reveal the theological framework in which the discussion over structural design is located.

The BWA urgently needs Baptist theologians among us to help us to overcome the limited assumptions presaged in the names the BWA has adopted for itself. We also need their help to establish the appropriate theological principles that inform the methodology used to develop the structures of cooperative instruments like the BWA. Otherwise, we are left to draw from the barren desert of secular theories of management which betray our failure to take properly into account the divine foundation for the expression of our vocational commitment.

As Paul Fiddes, Bryan Haymes, Richard Kidd and Michael Quicke said, in their very useful work, *On the Way of Trust*, published in 1997, the way church bodies think of ourselves “has the potential to steer us through temporary fashions in the culture of management; it can keep our eyes on the Kingdom and guard us from selling-up the call to mission. It can keep us attentive to crucial prophetic voices speaking to us from the margin.”

What a timely reminder!

FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY
Neville Callam

HAVE YOU MAILED YOUR RETURN ENVELOPE YET?

If not, the next issue of *Baptist World* could be your last!

Beginning in October 2008, the entire *Baptist World* magazine will be available online. Return the enclosed envelope to continue receiving your copy of *Baptist World* in the mail.

Thank you!
Each year, Baptists around the world designate a special day to pray for each other. This year, pray especially for those who are suffering, for those who are persecuted, for those who continue to hunger, for those who have fled their homes, and for those whose churches have been locked or burned to the ground.

Pray for Baptists who are suffering as they work to change the world for Christ, and pray for the Baptist World Alliance, your link with your Baptist brothers and sisters around the world.

To request bulletin inserts, bookmarks, offering envelopes, and prayers for churches participating in BWA Day, visit us at www.bwanet.org.

You may also call +1 703-790-8980 ext. 137 or email Linda@bwanet.org.