Baptists in the Disaster Zone
New BWA Director Takes Up Appointment

Raimundo César Barreto Jr. of Brazil assumed the position of Baptist World Alliance Director of Freedom and Justice (F&J) on March 1, 2010.

Barreto is the first person to fill this position, which was created on September 1, 2008, following a decision of the BWA General Council in July of that year in Prague, Czech Republic.

An ordained Baptist pastor since 1993, Barreto holds a doctoral degree in Christian Social Ethics from Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey in the United States, as well as degrees from the McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia, also in the US, and from the North Brazil Baptist Theological Seminary in Recife. He also studied at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic.

He has worked extensively in academia in Brazil and in the US, including at the North Brazil Baptist Theological Seminary; the Northeast Baptist Theological Seminary in Feira de Santana; the Christian Education Seminary in Recife; Lancaster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania; and at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Barreto has conducted research on Christian and social justice issues in Latin America. He has special interest in working with organizations in human rights, and in advocating for those who have special needs.

Prior to joining the staff at the BWA Center in Falls Church, Virginia, in the US, Barreto was pastor of Igreja Batista Esperança (Hope Baptist Church) in Salvador, Bahia state, Brazil, and worked as general coordinator for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Ethics in Brazil, among several other appointments in church and community organizations.

The F&J Division of the BWA addresses issues of human rights and religious freedom, and coordinates the relationship between the BWA and the United Nations, where the BWA holds membership in several UN agencies.

Barreto is married to Eliã, a nurse who worked in public health, and is the father of two sons, Caio, 15, Cauã, 3, and a daughter, Luana, seven months.
16 **Baptists Devastated by Chile Quake**

250 Baptist churches were destroyed, reports Raquel Contreras, and untold thousands suffer as a result of the recent quake in Chile. Contreras also expresses concern for the spiritual state of the Chilean people in this time of disaster.

18 **BWA Team Visits China**

Visiting churches and speaking openly with church leaders, a BWA delegation led by President David Coffey conducted a “listen and learn” tour in China. They traveled as guests of the CCC, an umbrella organization for Protestant churches in China. The delegation was impressed with the level of Christian witness. Though there is not yet full liberty for the church in China, there is sufficient freedom for a vibrant, spirit-filled church life to exist.

20 **Already, Not Yet**

Blake Killingsworth reports encouraging and discouraging observations from the recent BWA tour in China. He found impressive work in the area of Bible distribution, social action, and Christian conversion, but much more still to be accomplished. The Kingdom of God, he asserts, never remains “trapped indoors” by regulations or boundaries.

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**Special Congress Section**

22 **Congress Continuities**

In anticipation of the 20th Baptist World Congress in Hawai’i, Ken Manley surveys the impact of more than one hundred years of these international gatherings.

26 **Congress Speakers**

Gifted pastors & teachers from around the world will lead the Congress sessions.

28 **Congress Schedule**

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Pedagogy — The Church, Leadership and Theological Education in Africa: Papers in Honour of Professor Emeritus Osadolor Imasogie Ph.D.

Ibadan Baptist Press (Nig.) Ltd., 2009

30 **In Memoriam**
FROM THE PRESIDENT
David Coffey

Everything You Say about China Is True Somewhere in China

It was a privilege to visit China and follow in the steps of each BWA president since the early 1980s who has made an official visit. Our gracious hosts, the China Christian Council, have been represented at every BWA congress since 1985 and they are planning to be at the Hawai‘i congress. The comment I heard from an informed source prior to my visit was – “Everything you say about China is true somewhere in China.”

So is the church in China growing?
Yes – there has been phenomenal church growth during the last 30 years. The official figure provided by the government states that there are 16 million believers meeting in 7,000 registered church buildings with 25,000 meeting places. This figure of 16 million does not include believers in unregistered churches.

Is there full religious freedom in China today?
Not as we would understand religious liberty following a Western model of freedom of religion. There are strict government regulations for churches. If believers choose not to register their church on conscience grounds they are classified by the government as law breakers. Recent history tells us Christians will always differ in how they approach the requirements of a communist government. According to their conscience they will either bear their witness with discretion and register, or with valor they will dissent. We raised with government representatives the possibility of a figure of more than 100 million believers in China, which would take into account the reportedly large numbers of believers in unregistered churches, but were unable to receive confirmation of this figure from any official source.

Is the Bible freely available in China?
Yes it is. Our visit to the impressive new premises of the Amity Printing Press in Nanjing was an inspiring experience.

Each month, the company produces one million copies of the Scriptures, with versions in various languages including eight Chinese minority languages and sets of a Braille version of the Bible. Amity printed 100,000 copies of Chinese-English bilingual versions of the Four Gospels for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. By May 2009 more than 65 million Bibles had come off their production lines. More than 20 million Bibles have been produced for the international market with exports to more than 70 countries.

Is the church in China able to evangelize?
We encountered remarkable testimonies of how people come to faith in Jesus Christ. We heard reports of the visit of Franklin Graham in October 2009 when he preached to 10,000 people at the Bethel Church Baoding and at the conclusion of the service 1,000 responded to his invitation to give their lives to Christ. In recent years the Christmas festival is recognized in China as a commercial opportunity and many churches tell the Christmas story at special services which appeal to the community. The pastor of Hangzhou Chong Yi Christian Church, with 6,000 members, told me they had recorded 3,279 professions of faith during their Christmas services in 2009.

Is the church persecuted and do people go to prison for their faith?
There is sufficient evidence that in some specific provinces there is harassment of congregations and arrest of unregistered church leaders. The BWA delegation sought clarification of the unregistered church as there had been reports in Western newspapers of the unregistered congregation at Shanghai Wanbang church being evicted from its building in December 2009, and a pastoral leader from Xinjiang province who had been given a prison sentence for “providing state secrets to overseas organizations.” (See Supporting Chinese Christians article by Mervyn Thomas in the Guardian newspaper, Friday, December 18, 2009).

We specifically asked our Christian hosts if we could meet with unregistered church leaders but they asked us not to convene any “unscheduled meetings,” and since we did not want to bring them into conflict with the state authorities, we felt we had to honor their request.

What can we say about China?
We can celebrate the advances in religious freedom in China.

We can applaud the affirmations of China’s Communist Party that religious believers have an important role to play in the development of society.

We can thank God for the courage and vibrancy of the church in China.

We can pray that Chinese Christians will have full freedom to exercise their faith in Christ and for the release of unjustly imprisoned Chinese believers.

We can pray for God to bless China and make it a country of love, justice, freedom and prosperity.

Everything You Say about China Is True Somewhere in China
Denton Lotz, former general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), will receive the BWA Human Rights Award during the Baptist World Congress in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, which will be held July 28 to August 1.

Lotz, who was BWA general secretary from 1988-2007, led the international Baptist organization in some of its groundbreaking actions and decisions on racism, religious freedom, and other issues of human rights.

Lotz helped to initiate a Special Commission on Baptists against Racism and Ethnic Conflict, which was formed in 1992 in response to race-related riots in Los Angeles in the United States and racial and ethnic conflicts in other countries. The commission produced the Harare Declaration, which was adopted by the BWA General Council in 1993 during its meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe. In the declaration, Baptists pledged to “expose and challenge the sin of racism.”

Under Lotz’s leadership the BWA held an International Summit of Baptists against Racism in January 1999 in Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States. Delegates from approximately 30 countries drafted and affirmed a statement declaring a “decade to promote racial justice,” beginning in 2000, and urged BWA member bodies to promote efforts to eradicate racism and fight against ethnic conflict worldwide. The “Atlanta Covenant” called on Baptists to become “agents of reconciliation” and work for integrated worship, holistic evangelism, the elimination of unfair trade, and the protection of the rights of aboriginal and tribal peoples.

The former BWA leader also initiated or led human rights visits to several countries, and has met a number of world leaders to discuss issues of human rights in their respective nations, such as with former presidents Fidel Castro of Cuba, Daniel arap Moi of Kenya, and Lech Kaczynski of Poland.

It was under Lotz’s leadership that the BWA emphasized its observation of Human Rights Day each year, and launched an annual human rights award, which is given to a Baptist who has made significant contribution in advancing human rights in his or her life, work and ministry.

The move to create the Division of Freedom and Justice (F&J) started under Lotz’s tenure several years before it was brought into being. The division was formally inaugurated on September 1, 2008, following on a decision of the BWA General Council in Prague, Czech Republic, in July of that year. The F&J division addresses issues of human rights and religious freedom, and coordinates the relationship between the BWA and the United Nations, where the BWA holds membership in several UN agencies.
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) continues to watch the situation in Nigeria where Baptist leaders are concerned about violence between Muslims and Christians. “Religion is being used as a veneer or as a front or cover in order to take control of the state,” the BWA was told by Solomon Ishola, general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC).

Ishola was responding to the recent violence in Plateau State where there have been clashes between Muslims and Christians. The most recent incidents occurred in early March when more than 500 Christians were killed in villages close to Jos, the administrative capital of Plateau State, with most being women and children.

The state has had a long history of conflicts. In January, approximately 500 persons died from clashes between Muslim and Christian factions, with an estimated 5,000 persons displaced by the fighting. Approximately 1,000 persons died from what were allegedly religious clashes in 2001, and some 300 were killed in 2008.

Plateau State lies in the middle of the divide between the predominantly Muslim north of Nigeria and the predominately Christian south. Ishola, who heads the largest Baptist convention in Africa, explained that the clashes are mainly between ethnic groups. “It is a struggle between indigenous people and settlers,” explained Ishola, a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance.

The Hausa-Fulani are the settlers, while the Birom are the indigenous people group. The former group is mostly Muslim. The Birom, while being indigenous, are a minority group in Plateau State and are predominantly Christian. “Plateau state is traditionally Christian,” said Ishola. But with the Hausa-Fulani fast becoming the majority, Christians are resisting attempts by that group to take control of the state, said Ishola.

Plateau State is one among a few traditionally Christian states, including Benue State, which is bordered by other states that are controlled by the Hausa-Fulani. A number of these historically Muslim states have established Sharia Law, a form of Islamic jurisprudence.

Baptists have been affected by the clashes. In January, six Baptists were killed while seven Baptist churches were burnt. Baptists, who are mainly in the southwest of Nigeria, are deeply concerned about the conflict. Migrant workers in the oil-rich Delta, many of whom come from other states, including Plateau, are worried about their families. “Many Baptists in other parts of Nigeria have relatives there,” Ishola stated.

The NBC, which has 2.5 million members in 9,500 churches, has given aid to victims of the clashes. In January, the NBC sent the equivalent of approximately US$55,000 after the violence.

The BWA has condemned the violence and has called on all Baptists to pray for Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa. “We are saddened by the continued violence deeply impacting Christian communities in Nigeria, and regret the ongoing loss of human lives caused by this ethnic and religious unrest,” said Raimundo Barreto, director of the Division of Freedom and Justice of the BWA. “The BWA calls on all Baptists around the world to pray for those who are experiencing grief and sorrow; and urges Nigerian and international authorities to take all necessary actions to ensure a permanent end of these conflicts,” Barreto stated.

In the meantime, the NBC is working through the Interreligious Council to try and help to stem the violence. The council, which comprises both Christian and Muslim leaders, “aims to bridge the gap, bring peace, and challenge the government to protect life and property and to compensate persons for the loss of life and property,” explained Ishola.

The NBC participates in the Interreligious Council with other Christian bodies that are affiliated with the Christian Council of Nigeria and the Christian Association of Nigeria.

Ishola accuses the federal government of lacking the will to address the crisis. “The national leaders lack the political will to deal with the situation due to the dynamics of religion in the country.” The leaders, Ishola stated, “may have sympathy with the settlers.”

Ishola fears the breakup of his country, which is dogged by ethnic differences and conflicts. “Nigeria is several countries in one,” he said. “Tribes that are being molested and persecuted may lose patience.” But Christians, he declared, “are optimistic that if there are able leaders,” the breakup of Nigeria can be avoided.

More than 650 young people from 15 countries across the Asia Pacific region of the Baptist World Alliance gathered for the 15th Asia Pacific Baptist Youth Conference in Hong Kong from December 27-31, 2009.

Using the theme, “Soar Higher,” the participants met in morning plenary Bible study sessions, small family groups, and evening celebrations. The afternoon consisted of training and seminar sessions. The format of the conference was similar to that of the Baptist Youth World Conference, hosted by the BWA and held every five years.

Outgoing president of the Asia Baptist Youth Fellowship (ABYF), Jesse Ray Porras, described the purpose of the conference as a time of fellowship, inspiration and instruction. He challenged the participants to focus on the issues affecting their region and to seek ways to respond.

Vee Tetseo was elected as the new president of the Asia Baptist Youth Fellowship to succeed Porras. Tetseo is originally from Nagaland in Northeast India but now lives in Okinawa, Japan, where he serves as associate pastor of the
First Baptist Church of Baghdad in Iraq was damaged by an explosion less than half a kilometer, or about one third of a mile, from the church building.

The incident occurred on the morning of January 26 when a suicide bomber drove an 18-wheel truck with explosives into a crowded intersection, killing several bystanders.

The pastor, workers and children at a kindergarten school at the church were not physically harmed, but the Baptist church building suffered serious damage.

First Baptist Church of Baghdad is a congregation belonging to a small union, the Baptist Church of Baghdad, which is affiliated with the European Baptist Federation (EBF). The EBF is one of six regional fellowships of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and includes churches in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Two members of the Iraqi congregation attended an EBF Youth Conference held in Elstal, Germany, from January 15-17, less than two weeks prior to the incident.

“This is the reality of what they, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the whole Iraqi people, face daily,” stated Tony Peck, BWA regional secretary for Europe and general secretary of the EBF, in response to the explosion.

“We are praying for peace and the ending of the violence in Iraq, but also for the clear and courageous witness of Christian believers in these troubled times,” said Peck.

Okinawa Daiichi Baptist Church. He leads a worship band, has authored several books on worship, and holds a doctorate degree in theology from the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary.

Tetseo is also now the vice president of the BWA Youth Department for the Asia Pacific Region, and will represent the region on the BWA Youth Committee.

Speakers and presenters at the conference came from Hong Kong, Thailand, Japan, Australia, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, France and the United States.

A BWA team led training sessions for youth leaders. The BWA team included George Mensah, executive minister of Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, DC; Ivel Turner from Calvary Baptist Church in New Jersey in the United States; Olu Menjay from Ricks Institute in Liberia; and BWA Youth director Emmett Dunn, who served as the keynote speaker and installed the new officers.
Within 24 hours of the earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, Baptists were already making preparations to fly into the Caribbean country. Members of Hungarian Baptist Aid quickly mobilized and flew into the United States and linked up with team members from North Carolina Baptist Men. The two groups together formed the team of Baptist World Aid Rescue24, which does search and rescue for BWAid in response to natural disasters. After long delays due to the difficulty of travel into the country, the first team finally arrived in Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital, on January 15. They flew into the Dominican Republic and were escorted across the border into Port-au-Prince by “blue helmets,” United Nations peacekeeping soldiers.

The conditions they met on the ground were horrific. “The situation is terrible, I have never seen anything like
this,” said Bela Szilagyi, head of Hungarian Baptist Aid, who has been working in major disaster zones for more than 10 years. Szilagyi said they came across “immense chaos, confusion, and the terrible smell of dead bodies.”

The team set to work, doing the best they could to mend broken bones and bodies, providing medical care for several hundred persons at a community clinic in Pétionville, a suburb of Port-au-Prince, close to the epicenter of the 7.0 earthquake.

“Hundreds of people have been waiting for medical care in the hall and even in the parking lot at the clinic,” said Szilagyi. Many, he said, had broken limbs and pelvises, fractured skulls, and badly injured ankles and feet. “Most of the injuries were already infected because of not having medical care for such a long time,” Szilagyi reported.

Country in Shock

Those touched by the quake were awestruck. “The whole country is in shock by this terrible event,” wrote Jules Casseus, president of the Northern Haiti Christian University in Limbé, approximately 130 kilometers, or 80 miles, from Port-au-Prince. “What

(Continued on next page)
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happened in Port-au-Prince will affect everybody in Haiti. It is a national disaster,” he said.

“Everybody around the country has a relative in Port-au-Prince,” Casseus elaborated. “In our area in the Limbé Valley, we have many cries of people who have lost a relative, a son or a daughter [who is] studying in Port-au-Prince,” the leader of the Baptist university said in his email, one of the first pieces of communication to come to the BWA out of Haiti after the quake.

Casseus informed the BWA that the quake affected his university, which is located in the rural north of Haiti and is largely outside of the disaster zone. “Our students from Port-au-Prince might not be able to come back for the second semester at the university,” he stated.

(Continued on page 12)

. . . chaos, confusion, and the terrible smell of dead bodies.
Baptists suffered badly in the aftermath of the quake.
“The fuel we buy for our generators and other products that we need always come from Port-au-Prince, so in the days ahead we will experience shortages in fuel and other items and this will cause a big problem for the running of the university.”

Baptists Suffer

Baptists suffered badly in the aftermath of the quake, with several pastors perishing. One of the pastors who died was Bienne L’Amerique, pastor of the 600-member Shiloh Baptist Church in Port-au-Prince. His children recounted the tragedy of what happened that day. “I was reading on the first floor when the earth moved as if a great chasm opened up and our house fell into it,” said Bioutelle, the 11-year-old daughter. “My mother and father were talking in the living room; my father was just standing up to leave the house. A piece of the ceiling fell down, hit his head and he fell on the ground. My mother also fell down on the ground and rolled under the table. As for me, I don’t know what happened to me. All I remember is my older brother pulling me out from under the rubble. My leg was hurting very badly but it only had scratches on it.”

“I was watching TV on the second floor and I heard a screeching, exploding noise as the house collapsed,” recounted Bethill, age 16. “I was not hurt and I was able to pull my little sister out from under the ruins. My younger brother was not at home, he was at [our] grandmother’s place. We heard the screaming of our mother and we found her under the concrete rubble. She could not move. My sister and I tried to rescue her and pull her out. I don’t know how we managed it. I’m only 16 and not very strong; Bioutelle’s just a little girl,” said the eldest of the three children. “Our dad was too deep under, we could not move him. He did not speak a word and he did not move. My mother is saying that it is possible that he died immediately when the ceiling fell on his head.”

A number of other Baptists died in the quake, while many more were displaced. “A lot of church members are now homeless,” wrote Eugene Gedeon, a vice president of the Baptist Convention of Haiti. “They spend nights in the streets. They are starving,” said Gedeon.

Baptists Respond

Baptists in the country mobilized relief efforts, while Baptists from around the world began to send in aid. The Baptist Convention of Haiti and Haiti Baptist Mission received initial grants totaling $20,000 from BWAid shortly after the disaster. “We must make a generous response to this massive catastrophe,” Paul Montacute, BWAid director, said in his appeal to Baptists around the world.

The Haiti Baptist conventions provided food, water, and medical care in the early days after the seismic event. “You can imagine their urgent need. They cannot cook, they are thirsty, they are injured. The children and old persons are more fragile,” Eugene told the BWA.

The Baptist Convention of Haiti has been providing meals for approximately 500 families that were housed in 10 Baptist churches in the disaster zone, including 80 families at Shiloh Baptist Church and 70 families at El Shaddai Baptist Church.

At the time of reporting, more than US$600,000 was either pledged or received by BWAid for Haiti relief. In true Macedonian fashion, less financially endowed Baptists have been making their own contributions. Otniel Bunciu, president of the Baptist Union of Romania, reported that “churches in Romania are responding well to the appeal” that was launched to assist victims of the Haitian earthquake. His union raised and sent almost US$50,000 to the BWA for Haitian relief.

“I am quite amazed but enthused at the same time as Romania is not a very rich country,” Bunciu told the BWA.
Maurice Mondengo from the Democratic Republic of Congo composed a song, “Tears of the Sunset” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dPtxreq0Y) in memory of the victims who died in the quake. In reference to the time of day the quake struck, (in the evening), Mondengo said, “Those we mourn were close to seeing the sunset of Tuesday, January 12, 2010. But alas, they never will again.”

After recovery comes rebuilding. The challenge after the massive destruction in Haiti, which saw more than 200,000 persons losing their lives and between 60 and 80 percent of the buildings in Port-au-Prince badly damaged or destroyed, is to rebuild the infrastructure of the country. It is also to help to meet the spiritual needs of the people. Fortunately, Baptists have had long experience in assisting in rebuilding lives, leaning ever resolutely on the power of prayer and the compassion coming from our Lord.

“A lot of church members are now homeless. . . . They spend nights in the streets. They are starving.”

“Obviously the Lord touched the hearts of many Baptists in Romania and I am so glad that we are able to do this as part of the Baptist world family.”

Moses Sudheer, a Baptist pastor in Andhra Pradesh state in India, reported, “By God’s grace we collected 4,500 Indian Rupees (approximately US$100) toward relief for the earthquake victims in Haiti…. Our hearts moved with compassion for the bereaved families of the terrible earthquake that occurred in Haiti,” Sudheer wrote.

Others, though not in a position to offer financial assistance, assured the BWA that they were keeping Haiti in their prayers. “The Nepal Baptist Church Council does not [have the] ability to do anything except pray,” said Ratna Bahadur Rai, general secretary. “However, our requests [go] to our Almighty God for the victims.”

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After recovery comes rebuilding. . . . Fortunately, Baptists have had long experience in assisting in rebuilding lives.
Two Baptist leaders from Haiti visited the offices of the Baptist World Alliance and told the story of the devastating earthquake that struck their country on January 12.

Eugene Gedeon, vice president of the Baptist Convention of Haiti (BCH), and Edrice Romelus, superintendent for evangelism and former general secretary of the Baptist Haiti Mission (BHM), were part of a roundtable meeting called by Baptist World Aid to work out details of assistance that BWAid and Baptists, mainly in North America, will provide to the Caribbean country.

“People are trying to lead a normal life, but they do not have homes,” said Gedeon in an interview following the conclusion of the roundtable meeting. “People are living under tents. People are sad. I can see the sadness in their faces,” said the pastor.

Romeus recounted the events of the first few days. “I was in my office when the earthquake struck. I saw the building swaying. Things started falling, such as the printer. Other employees inside the building fled outside,” he recalled.

“I did not know how grave the earthquake was,” Romelus continued. “We have a hospital on the same compound as our headquarters, and vehicles started arriving with the injured. In a short time, the hospital was filled up. There was no place to put people. People came from all over. We even put them in the dining room of the hospital. I did not know that this thing was so big.”

The next day, Romelus, whose offices are in an area close to Port-au-Prince, attempted to go downtown to the shattered city. “We had to stop, we could not continue. Houses had fallen. People were in the streets suffering. We felt lots of emotions. We saw a four year old boy and a nine year old girl wandering. We did not know what to do. We took them to the hospital, even though it was already full.”

Romeus and his team made another trip into the beleaguered capital a few days later where “we saw the scale of the destruction. There were huge amounts of dead people lying around, even at the university and the state house,” Romelus recalled. “There was a foul smell. Things got worse day by day.”

Gedeon, whose church headquarters are close to Cap-Haïtien, the second largest city in Haiti, did not feel much of the quake.
Cap-Haïtien is approximately 250 kilometers, or 155 miles, from Port-au-Prince. But Baptists belonging to the BCH who live in or close to Port-au-Prince suffered badly. Two pastors, Biene Lamerique and Venel Deciain, died in the temblor. One pastor lost four children, another lost three, yet another lost two, and still another lost one child. At least 80 members belonging to the BHM died, and at least 29 for the BCH.

It is still not ascertained how many churches suffered damaged or were destroyed, as some are difficult to reach. The BHM had accounted for about eight churches that were destroyed and approximately 24 damaged. Many Baptists lost homes and many schools experienced destruction.

Despite the level of suffering and the extent of the disaster, Gedeon and Romelus said that there have been some positive responses. “Churches are almost full of people,” said Romelus. “Churches in other provinces have received new members who have left the capital.” Gedeon stated that “churches are encouraging people. This earthquake is an opportunity for the churches. Witch doctors have come to Christ.”

It is also an opportunity for the country to join in solidarity and rebuild a solid infrastructure, both Baptist leaders contend. Proper roads, good electricity systems, sound universities, strong public structures, and the enforcement of building codes – all these can now be put in place during the rebuilding process, Romelus and Gedeon agreed.

But the need remains great. Hospitals are still full. There is an urgent need to reopen schools and for children to return to school. The two Baptist groups are offering scholarships to children so that they may resume their education.

Homes need to be rebuilt. Both Baptist leaders informed the BWA that a good, solid structure for a house can be built for US$3,000. BWAid, the relief and development arm of the BWA, has pledged to provide 10 houses that are earthquake and hurricane resistant. BWAid will also contribute to constructing a multipurpose building in Port-au-Prince that can be used as a school, an orphanage, and a chapel. A center is to be secured that can be used for multiple purposes, such as providing office space for Baptist groups along with living quarters.

In the meantime, relief efforts continue as providing food, clean water, sanitation and medical help remain a priority.
Baptists in the South American country of Chile have been devastated by a massive earthquake that struck that country on February 27.

The 8.8 temblor, one of the strongest in recorded history, destroyed 250 Baptist churches that are affiliated with the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile (UBACH), one of two Baptist World Alliance (BWA) member bodies in the country.

“All the Baptist churches in the disaster zone were either badly damaged or destroyed,” Raquel Contreras, president of UBACH, told the BWA. “There are pastors living in tents,” she said. “Many Baptist members lost everything.”
Two teams of pastors visited the affected areas, and what they saw was “like a scene from World War Two,” said Contreras, who is also a vice president of the BWA. Members of the teams wept upon seeing the scale of the disaster, Contreras reported.

There is a sense of fear in the country. “People do not feel secure,” said Contreras. “Pastors are scared because of the strong aftershocks.”

At least 500,000 homes were damaged, and more than 700 people were killed.

Contreras, who was visiting with her daughter in the state of Kentucky in the United States when the earthquake struck, was anxious to return to Chile, but could not do so due to difficulties in traveling into the country. The reports she received, however, indicated that a massive reconstruction and rebuilding effort will have to take place not just generally, but by Baptists in particular, in order to rebuild Baptist churches and homes.

A concern is for the spiritual state of the Chilean people in this time of disaster. Pastors, she said, will be challenged to explain the tragedy to the people. But Contreras reported that there are stories of faith in the midst of the suffering, and explained that this is an opportunity for Christians, and Baptists in particular, to demonstrate the love and compassion of Christ.

Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the BWA, sent an initial sum of US$50,000 in relief funds to the two BWA member bodies in Chile, UBACH and the Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission.

Donations for Haiti & Chile

may be made via the BWA website at
www.bwanet.org

or sent to:

Baptist World Aid
405 North Washington Street
Falls Church, VA 22046
USA

For further information, email bwaid@bwanet.org.
BWA Team visits CHINA

CCC President Gao Feng expressed pleasure at the strong ties of friendship with the BWA

Above: David Coffey speaking with Guo Wei, director general of the State Administration for Religious Affairs in the Foreign Affairs Department in China
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the China Christian Council (CCC) have reaffirmed the relationship between both bodies that began in the early 1980s.

In January, a BWA team led by President David Coffey visited the cities of Beijing, Nanjing, Hangzhou, and Shanghai in China as guests of the CCC, an umbrella organization for Protestant churches in China.

Gao Feng, CCC President, expressed pleasure at the strong ties of friendship with the BWA and expressed the hope that these ties could be built on in the years ahead.

BWA leaders have visited China as guests of the CCC since the early 1980s. CCC leaders began attending the Baptist World Congress in the 1980s, and are expected to be present at the 20th congress in Hawai‘i from July 28 to August 1, 2010.

Coffey and the BWA delegation conducted a “listen and learn” tour, and were impressed with the level of Christian witness in China. They were “able to visit churches and speak openly with church leaders.”

The BWA team visited the Amity Printing Press, which celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2010 and is one of the largest publishers of the Christian Bible in the world. The printing press produces approximately 1.5 million Bibles each month, in addition to other Christian literature and educational books for children. Amity has exported more than 20 million Bibles to more than 70 countries in 75 different languages.

Meetings were also held with the Amity Foundation, founded in 1985, which promotes education, social services, health and rural development. The foundation has established clinics, educational training programs, foster care projects, HIV/AIDS education programs and rehabilitation facilities, among other programs.

The BWA team was keen to determine the state and status of unregistered churches in China. The CCC reported a figure of 16 million Christians in registered churches, but other reports suggested that there were an estimated 80 million Christians in the most populous country in the world, “which would take account of the reportedly large numbers of believers in unregistered churches,” a report from the delegation stated.

“We specifically asked our hosts if we could meet with unregistered church leaders in order to verify these news reports but we were asked not to do so, and since we were guests of the CCC, we honored that request,” Coffey said.

“We must have patience for the church in China,” Coffey stated. “It is going in the right direction.” Even though “it became evident to us that there is not yet full liberty for the church, totally free of state control, there is sufficient freedom for a vibrant spirit-filled church life to exist under the existing religious law, which is evolving all the time.”

In addition to visiting with the CCC, the Amity Printing Company and the Amity Foundation, the delegation also had meetings with the leaders of the Three Self Patriotic Movement which, along with the CCC, includes state-sanctioned or registered Protestant churches in Mainland China. Meetings were also held with leaders and students at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, officials at China’s Foreign Affairs Department, and with the director general of the State Administration for Religious Affairs.

In addition to Coffey, members of the BWA delegation included Wood-Ping Chu of Hong Kong, a BWA vice president and president of the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation; Douglas Inglis of the Baptist Union of Scotland and the Scottish Baptist College; and Blake Killingsworth, assistant to the president at Dallas Baptist University in Texas in the United States and a member of the BWA Emerging Leaders Network.
In the field of eschatology, there is a common saying in regard to the role of the Kingdom of God on earth – “already, not yet.” The Kingdom of God is already present in the world in the hearts of the people of God, and it is also not yet present because so much more is still to come. As I flew home from my recent trip with the Baptist World Alliance delegation to China, this phrase came to mind, not with reference to the Kingdom, but with reference to the Chinese church – already, not yet.

Already

As guests of the China Christian Council, our delegation had the chance to see firsthand the work that the Lord has been doing among the Protestant churches in China, and the sight was nothing less than impressive in the area of Bible distribution, social action, and Christian conversion.

In the town of Nanjing, we toured the Amity Printing Press, the largest distributor of Bibles in the world. Begun in 1986, the group recently celebrated the printing of their 65 millionth Bible. The press is currently capable of churning out 1.5 million Bibles per month, with copies provided in not only Chinese, but also in eight minority languages as well as French, English, Spanish, and a variety of other languages. We also heard stories at each of our locations of individuals coming to Christ through the reading of the Bible, often as an assignment from a class teaching English to students. Being good Baptists and “people of the book,” these stories brought smiles to our faces.

There were also incredible examples of the church engaged in the social aspect of the Gospel. In a seminary in Nanjing, we discussed a new movement among the Chinese churches known as Reconstruction Theology. Drawing no connection to the western version of the same name, this movement is attempting to point the Chinese church back to the supremacy of the Scriptures and especially those passages that call upon the church to be Christ’s hands of love and service to the world around them. Another example came from the work of the Amity Foundation. Founded in 1986, the Amity Foundation is a Christian organization whose mission is to serve the Chinese community through medical aid, elderly care, special education, clean water initiatives, and a variety of other non-government organizations.

We visited various churches on our tour, each of which showed evidence of dynamic, Spirit-filled activity. Perhaps the most striking symbol of this came as we toured the

“We toured the Amity Printing Press, the largest distributor of Bibles in the world.”
bustling city of Hangzhou. In the middle of this modern town, filled with cars and high rises and economic activity, stood this impressive building, topped with a golden cross, a beacon of Christianity. As we approached the building, the words “Jesus Loves You” jumped out, as the church was providing an invitation for all to see. Meeting the pastors of the church, we discovered that over the Christmas holidays, the congregation had held a series of four evangelistic meetings, and from these meetings, more than 3,200 came forward to profess faith in Christ. Amazing!

Not Yet

While so much among the church in China was impressive, there is still much that needs to be done. For example, Bibles are being churned out in the millions for China. However, the 65 million copies that Amity Press has distributed do not even cover a tenth of the population of China. In addition, in order to obtain a Bible, one has to visit a church. Bibles are not allowed to be sold in your average bookstore or on the street from a vender. Fans, silk scarves, and other items were found on every corner, but a Bible had to be sought out in order to locate.

In reference to the Social Gospel, it was a great encouragement to see the church engaged in helping its fellow man. Indeed, the church is gaining a wonderful reputation as an avenue of help for the community. However, the prophetic voice of the church is often lacking. Because of the Chinese ideal of harmony, it is rare that churches speak out against the Chinese culture or especially the Chinese government. Peace is to be sought above all else, but Christ is not only the Prince of Peace, he is also the Prophet calling the culture to account for the Kingdom of God.

Lastly, while it was wonderful to hear about the results of the evangelistic services held inside the church, it was discouraging to be reminded of the Chinese regulations disallowing similar evangelism outside of the church. Again, the ideal of harmony meant that an individual is not allowed to confront another with the Gospel out of fear of offending the listener, and therefore, open air preaching or one-on-one evangelism is illegal. In addition, church gatherings have to be registered, thus making illegal the “unregistered” or “underground” church, a population that may number some 60-80 million. Perhaps it is just my Baptist blood, but these regulations weigh heavy on my heart. It is great that the Gospel can be proclaimed so effectively and dynamically inside the doors of the registered church, but the Gospel has never been trapped indoors and can never be regulated.

Already, not yet. The Lord has done so much work throughout China, and our Chinese brothers and sisters should be encouraged in their Bible distribution, social action, and Christian evangelism. At the same time, there is so much more to do. May in the years to come, the “not yet” become the “already” as the Bible freely floods the land, a prophetic voice rises up against contemporary culture, and the Gospel indoors and outdoors is proclaimed without regulations or boundaries.

Blake Killingsworth is assistant to the president at Dallas Baptist University in Texas in the United States and a member of the BWA Emerging Leaders Network.
Thousands of Baptists around the world are preparing to travel to Hawai‘i in July for the 20th Baptist World Congress. This next congress will continue a tradition among Baptists that began 105 years ago. Travel is now faster and easier, but the essential attraction of such a congress remains similar.

As early as 1793, John Rippon in London expressed the hope that “the baptized ministers and people” from the world would soon gather, “probably in London.” The first congress, however, did not eventuate until 1905 when more than 3,000 Baptist representatives from 26 countries met, as Rippon had prophesied, in London. This was a significant moment in global Baptist history and showed a growing sense of identity and unity. Many were thrilled to hear outstanding Baptists from around the world: people like English preachers Alexander Maclaren and John Clifford and the Southern Baptist theologian E.Y. Mullins.

At each subsequent congress thousands have found inspiration, challenge and encouragement. Stories of persecution and hardship have provoked prayer and compassion. Burdens have been shared, theological issues debated, world problems analyzed, patterns of church life explored, plans for shared mission formulated. The volumes published after each congress remain a valuable source for Baptist thinking on crucial issues of that time.

The theme for the second congress, held in Philadelphia, USA, in 1911, was “The Christianization of the World,” and was attended by around 7,000 people. Leaders like Walter Rauschenbusch and Shailer Mathews of the USA spoke on the social crises of the day. With the outbreak of war, BWA activities effectively ended.

Baptist leaders worked hard to restore relationships and eventually the third congress was held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1923. Nationalism, communism and moral laxity were among problems faced at this congress. In 1928 the fourth congress was held in Toronto, Canada, with the theme, “Baptist Life in the World’s Life,” and some 4,856 delegates from 32 countries were present as well as many Canadian
visitors. Romanian Baptists were supported in their struggle for religious freedom.

The 1930s were marked by the Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe. Nonetheless, the fifth congress was held in Berlin in 1934 and attracted considerable international attention. The political context could not be ignored and a

**Thousands have found inspiration, challenge and encouragement.**

BWA commission on “Nationalism” deplored it as a great obstacle to peace.

A record crowd came to the sixth congress in Atlanta, USA, in 1939 with 12,445 delegates and tens of thousands more who attended various sessions. After World War II, but with much of Europe still under reconstruction and with the East-West tensions continuing, the seventh congress was held in Copenhagen in 1947. A powerful affirmation called a “Charter of Freedom” was adopted. The congress theme was “Unity in Christ.”

In 1950, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, hosted the eighth congress with the theme “And the Light Shineth in the Darkness.” More international in scope and representation, this congress drew large crowds to spectacular events, such as a street parade that attracted some 60,000 people.

Special hopes were realized by the Golden Jubilee Congress held in London in 1955. Delegates numbered 8,524 from 60 countries. The theme was the appropriate text, “Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday and Today and Forever,” a continuation of the strong christological themes of many congresses. Advocating religious freedom was still a priority. For the first time evangelist Billy Graham spoke at a BWA congress meeting, a practice continued at every congress until his ill health made it impossible.

**Burdens have been shared, theological issues debated, world problems analyzed.**

Despite the ongoing cold war and rising nationalism in numerous colonies, Baptists in the turbulent 1960s increasingly became a more genuinely international body. This was symbolized by the first congress in the Southern Hemisphere that was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1960.

(Continued on next page)
Brazilian Baptists were greatly inspired by this congress and entered a period of phenomenal growth.

At Miami Beach in 1965, where the registrants numbered 19,758 (of which 17,973 were from the USA), the theme was “Jesus Christ in a Changing World.” The only African to serve as BWA president, William R. Tolbert, later president of Liberia, began his term in 1965.

The first congress in Asia was held in Tokyo in 1970 and, though numbers were inevitably lower (8,556 from 78 countries), the theme of “Reconciliation through Christ” attracted many Asian delegates to their first congress meeting. The BWA returned to Europe for the thirteenth congress in 1975 and again met at Stockholm in Sweden where the focus was “New people for a New World – Through Christ.” Significant structural changes to the BWA were approved.

During the 1980s and 1990s the globalization of BWA work continued. More delegates from the developing world were enabled to attend congress meetings. Toronto in 1980 saw more than 20,000 delegates reflect on the theme “Celebrating Christ’s Presence through the Spirit.” USA President Jimmy Carter spoke at this congress. A disappointing attendance of about 9,000 delegates gathered in Los Angeles in 1985, although 93 countries were represented, to focus on the theme, “Out of Darkness into the Light of Christ.”

Back in Asia for the sixteenth congress, Baptists received a huge welcome from Korean Baptists when they met in Seoul in 1990. Speakers came from all six continents to develop the theme “Together in Christ” whilst a special focus of the congress was on prayer. A “Seoul Covenant” by which Baptists agreed to accept 1990-2000 as a decade of evangelism was enthusiastically adopted.

Beautiful Buenos Aires in Argentina was the venue for the seventeenth congress in 1995. Vibrant worship sessions led in developing the theme, “Celebrate Christ: The Hope of the World.” For the new millennium, Baptists gathered in Melbourne, Australia, in January 2000 (rather than the customary mid-year) to celebrate the theme of the eighteenth congress, “Jesus Christ Forever, Yes!” This first congress in the South Pacific attracted large numbers from that region.

The centenary congress held in Birmingham, England, in 2005 will be fresh in the memory of many thousands of Baptists, 14,612 from 112 countries. “Jesus Christ Living Water” brought strong hope and refreshment.

We look forward to Hawai’i and the challenging theme, “Hear the Spirit.” But once again the main benefits for delegates will come from sharing in worship, prayer and Bible study; facing the crucial issues of our modern world; understanding more of our identity and beliefs as Baptists; supporting those being persecuted or oppressed; committing to evangelism and mission; and forming networks and friendships in order to encourage one another. Long may it continue!

Ken Manley is a former principal at Whitley College of the University of Melbourne in Australia. He is a member of the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity and the Academic and Theological Education Workgroup.
Are you thankful for today?
How about yesterday?

For 400 years, Baptists have been blessed by God.

For more than 100 years, the Baptist World Alliance has been uniting Baptists into one great family

Your gifts help us today when we
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Stand up for human rights
Send aid, medical help, and education resources
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Promote sound theology
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Alongla Aier is co-founder and associate professor in English and communication at the Oriental Theological Seminary, one of the primary theological institutions among the Nagas in Northeast India.

Aier has exercised her leadership in empowerment of marginalized women and has been a popular speaker at women’s and youth conferences in Northeast India, particularly in her native state of Nagaland. She is also a regular speaker at Baptist meetings and conferences, including at the Asia Pacific Baptist Congress in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in May 2006, and during the BWA Living Water conference in Dimapur in Nagaland, India, in December 2007. Aier has also conducted training for government civil servants in Nagaland.

Janet Clark is academic dean and associate professor of counseling at Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto, Canada.

She previously served as vice dean at McMaster Divinity College, where she taught counseling, pastoral care and field education. She also worked in Indonesia as a missionary for eight years.

She has lectured widely in a number of countries and contexts and is a frequent conference and retreat speaker.

Her teaching, publications and continuing research interests are in the areas of multicultural competence, spiritual care and counseling and professional education.

Pablo Deiros is president of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and is former pastor of First Baptist Church and Central Baptist Church in Buenos Aires.

His books include Evangelicals and Political Power in Latin America and History of Christianity in Latin America, and he co-edited the book, The Rising Revival.
Allan Demond is senior pastor at New Hope Baptist Church in Melbourne, Australia, and a former president of the Baptist Union of Victoria. Demond moved to Australia from Canada in 1995 to become senior pastor for New Hope. Under his leadership the church has moved through a time of significant transformation and growth.

Karl Johnson, general secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union, is one of Jamaica’s noted preachers. Johnson has been a keynote speaker at Jamaica’s National Prayer Breakfast, at the Caribbean Baptist Youth Festival, and at numerous evangelistic services. He is a former president of the Jamaica Council of Churches, a major ecumenical church body in Jamaica; former chairman of the board of the United Theological College of the West Indies, the leading Protestant theological school in the English-speaking Caribbean; and a member of the board of National Religious Media Company Limited, the leading religious broadcasting company in Jamaica.

Johnson is a member of various BWA bodies, including the General Council, the Congress Program Committee, the Nominations Committee, the Commission on Baptist Worship and Spirituality, and the Church Health and Effectiveness Workgroup.

Ngwedla Paul Msiza is general secretary of the Baptist Convention of South Africa and president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, one of six regional bodies of the BWA.

Msiza is a member of the two governing bodies of the BWA, the General Council and the Executive Committee, as well as the Congress Program Committee, the Membership Committee, the Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation, and the Academic and Theological Education Workgroup.

A graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, Msiza is a sought-after speaker in Africa and elsewhere.

Lance Watson is senior pastor of St. Paul’s Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, in the United States, and is host of the telecast “Positive Power,” seen on TV ONE Network.

His writings have been featured in the African American Pulpit, the Baptist Herald and several other publications. He is the author of Being Healthy From Now On, Maximize Your Edge: Navigating Life’s Challenges, and Meet Me in the Morning.

Watson is recognized for outstanding leadership in church and education.

He holds degrees from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia.
# BWA Congress Schedule

## MAIN PROGRAM
28 July – 1 August

### THE DAILY PROGRAM IS IN FOUR PHASES:
- **Morning:** with plenary marked by Bible Study
- **Lunch:** with the possibility of regional meetings
- **Afternoon:** with a variety of opportunities
- **Evening:** with plenary including sermon

## Wednesday, July 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morning/Afternoon</th>
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<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
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<td>General Council</td>
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<td>Golf Tournament</td>
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**Evening**
Opening Evening Celebration
Preacher: BWA President David Coffey

## Thursday, July 29

**Thursday, July 29**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morning Plenary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bible Study – Speaker: Pablo Deiros (Argentina)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Program/Youth Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Bible Study Discussion Groups (9 Language Groups)</td>
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**Lunch**
Regional Meetings – Asia/Pacific, Caribbean, North America

### Afternoon
Focus Groups
Mission in the City

### Evening
Evening Celebration - Worship
Preacher: Karl Johnson (Jamaica)

## Friday, July 30

**Friday, July 30**

<table>
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<th>Morning Plenary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bible Study – Speaker: Janet Clark (Canada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Bible Study Discussion Groups (9 Language Groups)</td>
</tr>
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**Lunch**
Regional Meetings – Africa, Europe, Latin America

### Afternoon
Focus Groups
Mission in the City

### Evening
Evening Celebration - Worship
Preacher: Alongla Aier (India)

Children’s Program/Youth Program
Philosopher and systematic theologian, Osadolor Imasogie, is by any measure one of the greatest Baptist theologians to emerge from the African continent. Not only has he exemplified what it means to do theology in an African context, he has also contributed enormously to the emergence of a distinguished set of Baptist theologians currently working on the continent.

Imasogie’s *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Africa Christian Press, 1993) still makes great reading. In this book, Imasogie laments the failure of “Western orthodox theology” to take into consideration worldviews beyond their own and he offers “guidelines” for a “new Christian theological approach in Africa.”

Not surprisingly, when Imasogie turned 80, “not a few beneficiaries of the enormous graces of God upon his life” compiled a festschrift in his honor. The 34 scholars who produced, *Pedagogy: The Church, Leadership and Theological Education in Africa*, edited by Ademola Ishola, Deji Ayegboyin and Sayo Oladejo, address Contextualization and Theology; Biblical Theology and Ethics; Pastoral Theology and Administration; Baptist Doctrine, Polity and History of Education; and The Imasogie Phenomenon. The book ends with six tributes to Imasogie by another set of African scholars.

By any measure, *Pedagogy* is an engaging read.
C. Bill Hogue, a former vice president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), died on January 26 in Texas in the United States, after a year-long struggle with cancer. He was 82 years old.

Hogue served in several capacities within the BWA, including as a member of the General Council and the Executive Committee, the two governing bodies of the international organization. He was also a longstanding member of the Executive Committee of the BWA Division of Evangelism and Education (E&E) where he, along with former E&E director, Tony Cupit, shared in several projects around the world. He was also a member of the Search Committee that recommended the appointment of Neville Callam as BWA General Secretary to succeed Denton Lotz in 2007.

At the time of his passing, Hogue was a member of the BWA Memorial Committee, the Mission and Evangelism Workgroup of the E&E Division, and the Personnel Committee.

From the time he met with Hogue when he appeared before the BWA Search Committee, Callam said he found Hogue to be “a gracious and compassionate person who had breadth and depth of vision for Christian involvement in the world and also a heart for people.”

The BWA leader stated that, “In Bill Hogue’s passing, the Baptist World Alliance has lost a vital partner, a team builder, and a special friend.”

“I have the fondest memories of Bill from the time I joined the BWA in the late 1980s,” said BWA President David Coffey.

“In the beginning of our friendship he was a brother beloved. I feel impoverished by the thought that I will never see Bill again at a BWA Gathering,” Coffey declared. “He was a Barnabas of an encourager; he stayed passionately focused on the Great Commission of Jesus; he was a loyal and gifted ambassador who carried infectiously a vision for the work of the BWA.”

Former BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz described Hogue as “a man with a passion for evangelism who also had a heart for racial reconciliation and social justice.”

A native of the state of Texas, Hogue graduated from Howard Payne University in Brownwood and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. From 1952-1971 he served as a pastor of three congregations in Texas and one in Oklahoma; was director of evangelism for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma from 1971-1973; vice president for evangelism for the Southern Baptist Convention’s Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) between 1973 and 1982; and executive director of the California Southern Baptist Convention from 1985-1995.

He leaves Betty, his wife of more than 60 years, four sons, and a daughter.

Funeral services took place January 30 at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church in Brownwood, Texas.
In early February, I was in Norway sharing with the Baptist community in celebrating their Ter-Jubilee. In wonderfully creative ways, Baptists of Norway recalled the beginnings of their work in 1860, reflected on the journey they have taken so far, and considered how to be radical, relevant and missional as they do ministry today. It was a privilege to be a part of events marking the start of an extended period of celebration. Under the capable leadership of their president, Jan Saethre, and acting general secretary, Arild Harvik, a Baptist community that suffered enormously from religious persecution in its early years took time to offer praise and thanks to God for the divine faithfulness of which they are glad beneficiaries.

Students of Norwegian Baptist history will immediately note the vastness of the vision that has characterized the national movement. Despite being a numerically small grouping with no more than 6,000 baptized members in 85 churches comprising a community numbering 11,000, Baptists of Norway have maintained a very strong tradition of international mission. This is all the more outstanding since Norway never had colonies! Their work among the people in the northern Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Nepal, and among the Chin and Karen people of Myanmar reflects the constructive concern for others for Christ’s sake that is the engine of Norwegian Baptist mission faithfulness. With sights set on mission, they have held the world in their hearts.

As we prepare for the upcoming 20th Baptist World Congress in Honolulu, Hawai’i, we recall the way in which Baptists in Norway have identified with the worldwide Baptist family. At the inaugural BWA Congress in 1905, four Norwegian delegates attended, representing the 3,000 members in the Nordic country. This year, more than 100 Norwegian Baptists will be in Honolulu!

Nor is the concern of Baptists in Norway merely to take their place among the world’s Baptists. They have distinguished themselves in the service they are ready to render to the worldwide Baptist movement. Not surprisingly, for 21 of the 105 years of BWA history, the organization has been served by two Norwegian general secretaries, Arnold Öhrn (1948-1960) and Josef Nordenhaug (1960-1969).

Today, the Baptist community in Norway reflects the rich cultural diversity that marks this new age of international travel, migration and the injustice that produces refugees. Baptists from regions served by Norwegian Baptists now form part of the Baptist Union of Norway. For this reason, new Norwegians who formerly resided in the Congo and in Thailand make up a sizable proportion of the local Baptist family.

Baptists worldwide will want to pray for the Baptists of Norway as they prepare for renewal in the calling to be faithful witnesses to Christ in a national context that is rife with religious skepticism and unbelief. Norwegian Baptists will face many challenges as they seek to minister within a national community that is caught in the vice grip of post modernity. However, they do not go forward unaided. The Spirit of the Lord is with them to lead them into a new era of evangelistic fervor that can match the needs of their local situation. They will need to take their place once more where Pastor Öhrn located them, when he presented his report to the first Baptist World Congress. This is what Öhrn said: “We have come to know from the Word of God that . . . truth is with Jesus Christ and that he always wins the battle . . . We have had brethren in prison, but now we preach everywhere. . . . We have only 15 men in Norway giving their whole time to preaching, but all 3,000 members are Baptist preachers, or are trying to be. . . . We want every hill and valley, mountain and shore to resound with the name of Christ.”

No less a vision than this will captivate the minds of those with their sights set on mission.
Hear the Spirit

at the

20th Baptist World Congress

Hawai‘i Convention Center, Honolulu, Hawai‘i

July 28 – August 1, 2010

Congress Website:  www.bwacongress2010.org

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