Recently, the Baptist World Alliance introduced new ways to relate to the global Baptist family. Innovations in technology are allowing us to make connections we have not made before, and to literally hold those connections in the palm of our hand – sometimes on something as small as a cell phone.

Nevertheless, the world economy has experienced a global flattening of growth that shows no signs of improving for the next few years. Programs and ministries around the world are suffering and that means people are suffering – from poverty, exploitation, disaster and conflict-related displacements, and lack of access to education and mechanisms of justice.

In the midst of all this, your global Baptist family is at work, in ministries of evangelism, economic development, peace, cooperation and speaking out for justice. Through the BWA, Baptists around the world are working harder than ever to connect you with those whose lives can be uplifted by these ministries.

We need your help. Your gifts to the Baptist World Alliance bring community and hope to every continent where Baptists work to minister in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In these pages, you’ll read about those ministries and how the BWA is networking the world to empower caring Baptists in the mission God has given the church.

We pray God will move you through these stories and pictures to partner with us, however small or large your gift may be. We are 222 Baptist organizations working together in 120 countries, with more than 41 million baptized believers in a total community of 110 million persons. We’re “your network to the world!”

Think for just a moment what could happen if every Baptist said “yes” to helping. Please use the envelope in this magazine to let us know you are with us. As a member of this dynamic, worldwide Baptist family, you too can make your contribution.

BWA News in Brief
Stories of inspiration, challenge, tragedy and praise from our diverse Baptist family around the world.

BWA Executive Meetings
Baptist leaders from 20 countries met to grapple with issues of current concern, process recommendations for action, report on developments within the alliance, and make decisions crucial for the future of the organization and its mission.

Regional Reports
2011 was an eventful year for Baptists in many parts of the world, as is evident in the reports presented at the Executive Meetings by the six regional secretaries of the Baptist World Alliance.
24 Baptist School & Orphanage Open in Haiti
A long time dream upheld by years of prayer has come true with the opening of a new school and orphanage complex in Haiti. This cooperative project, brought about through years of planning, was made urgent by the earthquake which destroyed most of the schools near Port-au-Prince.

26 Window on the World Banquet: Religious Intolerance at a High Level, says Ambassador

This year’s Window on the World Banquet included an address by United States Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cook. She spoke about the troubling rise in religious intolerance which fuels many conflicts in the world today.

27 In Memoriam

30 Book Notes
Daniel Carro reviews An Evangelical Saga: Baptists and Their Precursors in Latin America, by Justice Anderson, Xulon Press, 2005. Also highlighted are other books of interest to Baptists.

COVER PHOTO
BWA Executive and auxiliary committee members at worship during meetings from March 4-7 in Falls Church, Virginia in the US

Unless otherwise noted, photos in the issue are by BWA staff.
Remembering Baptist Times

When the Special Commemorative Edition of The Baptist Times (BT) was published on January 20, 2012, as its last hardcopy newspaper, a chapter in Baptist history closed with it.

The relationship between the Baptist World Alliance and BT has been longstanding. The penultimate page of the Official Report produced after the inaugural Baptist World Congress in 1905 was devoted to promoting what was identified as “the official publication” of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). The paper was called The Baptist Times and Freeman. According to the advertisement, each issue of the periodical was priced at the princely sum of one penny. Yet, the “principal contents” revealed the wide-ranging fare for which the successor paper, Baptist Times, came to be known.

These “principal contents” included weekly sermons by John Clifford, J. T. Forbes, Charles Brown and Thos. Phillips; notes from the “foreign field” contributed by “missionaries in Calcutta, Congo and China;” articles on “Personal Forces of the Denomination” – a profile of leading Baptists, ordained and lay, in the BUGB; and articles on “Current Continental Theology” by Newton Marshall and on “The Minister in the Study” by H. Wheeler Robinson. In addition, there were lesson notes for Christian Endeavour, a “Ladies’ Page” and a “Children’s Column.”

Throughout its 156 year history, BT has been a helpful source of information on Baptist life and ministry in the United Kingdom and beyond. In addition, BT has carried significant features on emerging issues in the life and ministry of the church.

Baptists worldwide remain thankful for the excellent coverage BT gave to important events and developments involving not only Baptists, but also Christians from other World Communions. Perhaps, the contribution of BT may best be appreciated in the context of a long line of periodicals emerging in the BUGB. These include Baptist Annual Register, the Baptist Magazine, Baptist Guardian, The Baptist, The Freeman and The Baptist Times and Freeman.

When the last issue of BT rolled off the press, I couldn’t help thinking that we are all the poorer because of this. Baptists worldwide have lost an invaluable ally in the search for an informed, intelligent and balanced voice on emerging issues and events, not only in the Baptist community, but in the worldwide Christian family. We wait with anticipation for the launch of the new BT website and appreciate the weekly email that is now being circulated in place of the hardcopy newspaper.

I am grateful to the British Baptist woman who, for many years, sent me a complimentary copy of each issue of BT while I served as a pastor in Jamaica. I will always remember BT!
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA), recognizing that youth are integral to the stability of nations, is joining forces with the global community to help address problems faced by youth. Utilizing existing channels and its NGO status within the United Nations community, the BWA hopes to bring youth issues to the forefront.

Current statistics make such a move compelling. It is estimated that, of the world population, more than one person in five are between the ages of 10 and 19 years old, totaling approximately 1.2 billion youth. The number increases to 1.8 billion when those aged 20-24 are added.

The global median age is estimated at 28.4, with some 40 countries such as Nigeria, Guatemala and Afghanistan having a median age of less than 20 years old. Uganda is the lowest at 15 years old. Much of the world’s violence affects youth. Approximately 250,000 homicides occur among youth 10-29 years of age each year, 41 percent of the total number of homicides globally. “For every young person killed by violence, 20-40 more sustain injuries that require hospital treatment,” a World Health Organization (WHO) report states. Such violence, the WHO claims, “contributes greatly to the global burden of premature death, injury and disability, but also has a serious, often lifelong, impact on a person’s psychological and social functioning.”

Several factors precipitate youth violence: low levels of social cohesion within a community; an absence of non-violent alternatives for resolving conflicts; high income inequality; rapid social and demographic changes; urbanization; and the quality of a country’s governance such as law enforcement and the provision of educational opportunities, etc. All these are in addition to parental failure through poor supervision and harsh, lax or inconsistent parental disciplinary practices.

While access to education for youth has improved over the past several decades, youth unemployment remains a concern. According to the UN, youth employment and income have deteriorated in Latin America over the past 20 or so years. In Sub-Saharan Africa, “the percentage of youth living in poverty is extremely high.” In the Middle East and North Africa, “unemployment is primarily a youth issue rather than a generalized population issue,” the UN noted. “Young people represent only about one third of the total working age population while they account for almost half of all unemployed people in the region.” The same UN report said that “in Central and Eastern Europe, 33.6 percent of youth are not in school and not employed.”

BWA programs for youth have traditionally been organized by the BWA Youth Department and regional youth bodies. These remain integral to BWA youth ministry as a whole. However, the BWA will continue to explore additional opportunities through the global community to address youth-related issues.

As a result of this commitment, the BWA sent two youth representatives to the 10th Annual Youth Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York City from January 18-20. The assembly focused on ways to use social media and mobile technology to help achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals which include eradicating extreme poverty, reducing child mortality rates, fighting disease epidemics such as AIDS, and developing a global partnership for development.

Melissa Gomes and Raphael Almeida represented the BWA at the youth assembly. “It was amazing to see so many young people who are enthusiastic and concerned with issues facing humanity gathered in one place,” Gomes reported. “Most presentations motivated us to action,” said Almeida. “Specifically as an organization that gathers churches and individuals, there are innumerable ways the Baptist World Alliance can be involved.”

While only an initial step, the BWA expects to make its mark as a global organization, sensitizing young people to the theological, ethical, social and international issues that affect them, and working to help overcome these obstacles.
Probably for the first time ever, Russian Protestants have commemorated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. This occurred on January 15 in a worship service held by Moscow City Church (MCC) at Hotel Milan in the south of the city which was attended by 70 mostly young people. The actual holiday, first celebrated in the USA in 1986, takes place on the third Monday of January.

Vitaly Vlasenko, Director of External Church Relations for the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and one of MCC’s pastors, stated that many Russians believe racism to be a distant and foreign issue. A report at the service by Daniel Ekat, a citizen of Cameroon, made clear that such a view can only be held by the white residents of Russia. Ekat, an engineer, has been beaten up twice during his 10 year stay in Russia. He reported: “My friends are often afraid to go out into the street. When a person covered with blood is brought into our dormitory, it leaves many of my friends aghast and uncertain as to whether they should continue their studies or return home immediately. Russians think only hooligans are involved in such practices, but that is only part of the truth. We are beaten on by all those who regard us as dark-skinned monkeys.” Vlasenko added that although discrimination may appear latent to some, it dare not be ignored in Russia and elsewhere.

In an interview, another speaker at the event, the American Methodist Matthew Laferty, pastor of the partially African Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy (MPC), insisted: “My people are confronted daily with the problem of racism.”

All speakers were adamant in their insistence that all human beings are created by God and of equal worth in his eyes – that any other opinion on this issue is sin. Galatians 3:28 was quoted more than once: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

MCC hopes Martin Luther King Day can become a traditional, annual event not only in their congregation. They are considering the creation of an annual Martin Luther King award to be presented to a person active in the fostering of human rights for all. Vlasenko says his church is committed to serving Moscow’s people by helping to change their way of thinking on moral issues.

MPC is very active in serving needy people of color as well as Russians. Vlasenko expresses the deep hope that MCC-MPC relations might “be strengthened and developed” during the coming years. MPC desires greater contact with Russian congregations – its social service projects are very much in need of further assistance. MPC’s “Racial Task Force” has been documenting violent acts committed against people of color over the past five years. As soon as additional funding and personnel are available, this documentation should be appearing in the Russian language. Moscow City Church is a member of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

William Yoder works with the Press service of the Russian Evangelical Alliance

A communiqué from the World Council of Churches (WCC) has called on all countries to recognize the rights of religious minorities.

The Study Consultation on Freedom of Religion and Rights of Religious Minorities, held in Istanbul, Turkey, from November 28 to December 2, 2011, analyzed the rights of religious minorities and freedom of religion in various contexts, and called for recognition of international human rights standards relating to religion, belief and religious minorities.

Planned by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the WCC, the consultation insisted that states and governing authorities should ensure that there is freedom for minorities to have or to adopt the religion or belief of their choice. This freedom should include the ability to change their religion; to manifest religion both privately and publicly, alone or with others, in worship, teaching, observance and practice; to bring up children in accordance with their own beliefs; to raise conscientious objections; as well as protection from discrimination in any sphere of life on the basis of religion or belief.

The communiqué, sent out in February, recognized and welcomed “positive steps taken towards a fuller respect for freedom of religion or belief in a number of contexts.” However, it expressed “grave concern” over “serious violations of these rights” in some countries and regions.

Countries are urged “to strengthen the existing protection mechanisms and devise effective safeguards against violations of national and international law relating to religious freedom.” It also stated that “concerted and coordinated efforts [should be made] on the part of religious, civil society and state actors in order to address violations” of minority religious rights.

The consultation in Istanbul was drawn from churches, church related organizations, academia, civil society and human rights organizations, and the legal profession in 23 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Americas and Europe. Christer Daelander of Sweden, a member of the Advisory Committee of the BWA Division on Freedom and Justice and the division’s Commission on Religious Freedom, represented the BWA at the consultation.
God’s mission is progressing in the Baltic nations. The Baptists of Latvia have adopted the goal of planting 100 new congregations by 2020, utilizing the advantage of independence that the Latvian people have enjoyed during the last two decades.

The Latvian population is about 2.3 million. More than 60 percent speak the Latvian language, but Russian is still quite popular. Latvia is one of the smallest nations in the European Union. The main Christian confessions are Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox and Baptist.

The history of Latvian Baptists goes back to the second half of the 19th century when some groups of indigenous people were not satisfied with the teaching of the state church and started to read their Bibles. The first baptisms took place on September 9, 1860, when several Latvian believers were baptized in Memele, now Klaipeda, in Lithuania. Latvian Baptists consider this date as the beginning of their movement. Since that time many indigenous congregations were established and chapels erected.

The Soviet period brought dark changes into the lives of Baptist people of Latvia. Thousands of believers and hundreds of leaders were deported and murdered in the communist labor camps. Church buildings were confiscated and many congregations were closed. But despite the difficulties, lectures in theology were being offered (unofficially), illegal youth and Sunday school work was taking place, and many hundreds of books were being prepared on simple typewriters and similar equipment by devoted Christians.

The Latvian Baptists regained their long desired freedom after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and started to reclaim their property which had earlier been taken away by the communist state. A seminary, Latvian Christian Radio, a publishing house and union offices as well as a Christian bookstore are in the reclaimed historic building that serves as the Baptist Center in Riga. There are altogether 88 churches with a total membership of about 6,600.

The Baptist movement in Latvia has been active in church planting from the very beginning, except during the period of communist repression.

Peteris Sprogis, bishop of the Latvian Baptist Union, said, “In recent years the leaders of our union discovered the need to give more attention to church planting. Thus we have adopted the goal to plant 100 new churches by 2020.” The Baltic Pastoral Institute, he stated, “has initiated the appropriate training for future pastors and church planters. We recognize that church planting must be at the top of our denominational agenda. This requires us to pray and think clearly about the development of a master plan that will release the potential of churches and individuals in missional activities and particularly in church planting. Our desire is to see more and more people come to know God and experience His transforming power.”

The Baptist union has adopted the “M4” initiative, which comprises four modules: Master, Mission, Multiplication, and Movement. M4 teaching emphasizes the basics of discipleship, multiplication of discipleship, prayer, fasting, and expectation of radical change.

Church planters in Latvia include 32-year-old Ilvars in Ropazi, a village located approximately 36 kilometers from the capital Riga. The new church plant was started two years ago. Currently the fellowship is comprised of about 20 persons. The congregation meets in a Baptist-owned camp site complex.

Daniel Trusiewicz is Mission Coordinator for the European Baptist Federation
A plot of land has been donated for the construction of a Baptist church in a village in Pakistan. Approximately 79 Christian families, most of them bondservants, live in Ghumanke village, appropriately two and a half hours by road from Lahore, the second largest city in Pakistan. “All the Christian families in the village are bondservants,” reported Samuel Ahsan, executive director of Save & Serve for Christ Ministries, based in Lahore.

As bondservants, these Christians are virtual slaves. “We can’t do anything without our owners’ permission,” the villagers claimed. They alleged that their “owners” do not allow them to send their children to school.

The closest church to the village is 21 kilometers or 13 miles away.
The European Baptist Federation (EBF) Youth and Children’s Workers Conference was held January 13-18 in the Middle Eastern country of Lebanon. The EBF includes Baptist unions in Central Asia and the Middle East.

The conference was attended by 25 persons from 14 Baptist unions and was hosted by the Lebanese Society for Education & Social Development (Lebanese Baptist Society) and the Convention of the Evangelical Baptist Churches in Lebanon.

The theme, “Knowing God, Navigating Faith in a Multi-religious World,” was explored through Bible studies, panel discussions, group discussions and paper presentations. Martin Accad, associate professor of Islamic studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in California in the United States, was the guest presenter. Tony Peck, BWA regional secretary for Europe and general secretary of the EBF, presented a paper on the “Challenges for European Baptists.”

Many of the unions, especially in Western Europe, have developed programs to assist their members to deal with challenges brought by growth in the immigrant population.

The Baptist convention and the Lebanese Baptist Society are separate and independent of each other. The leadership of the society, while it cooperates with the convention, operates the society as an autonomous organization. The society, whose mission is to “serve the Church in Lebanon and the Arab world through spiritual, social and educational development,” manages the Beirut Baptist School, the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, the Gateway Bookstore, Children and Youth Ministry, Community Relief and Development and a special program for children with learning disabilities. Most of the staff has served overseas in various corporate capacities.

The EBF views with grave concern the deteriorating situation in Syria and the increasing bloodshed arising from the conflict. We particularly pray for the families of the many thousands who have already died in the fighting.

The Syrian Baptist Convention has 13 churches with 600 members. The largest Baptist church is in the city of Homs where the worst fighting has taken place. Whilst communication with Syria is very difficult at the present time, it is our understanding that the pastor and congregation have left the city.

In this situation there is a serious concern about the continuing religious freedom for the Christian minority, whatever the outcome of the conflict. In other areas of conflict in the Middle East Christians have been leaving in large numbers. We pray that it may be possible for Christians to stay in Syria and other neighboring countries.

The EBF urges prayer for the whole situation in Syria, for an end to the fighting, and that a peaceful outcome may be found to the conflict. We pray for our Baptists and other Christian churches that in this situation they may be able to continue their witness to Christ, the Prince of Peace.

March 6, 2012
Surang Meets a Kiwi
By Julie Belding

Surang Kinghirunwatana, from Bangkok, Thailand, hadn’t been to New Zealand before.

But as one of some seventeen executive members of the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (ABPF), she got to visit our country when the APBF held its annual board meetings in Auckland on February 10-11.

Naturally we took the opportunity to show our visitors around, and Surang is pictured here at the Arataki Visitors Centre in the Waitakeres. No, it wasn’t a live kiwi. But she met plenty of live Kiwis (the other kind) who enjoyed introducing her and her Asian colleagues to our New Zealand way of life — including the barbecue, the pavlova, and the hongi (a Maori form of greeting where noses touch).

The APBF meetings in Auckland were hosted by Carey Baptist College, who also organized a colloquium, “Building Asia-Pacific Partnerships for Church and Mission,” for the Asian visitors on Thursday, February 9. Here they were welcomed by members of the tangata whenua (first people of the land) with a special powhiri, or Maori welcoming ceremony. On Sunday, February 12, after the meetings ended, some of us worshipped at the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle where John Kok of Kuala Lumpur, the APBF vice president, preached.

I was reminded what a truly multicultural country New Zealand is. We saw this at the colloquium, where — besides the Asian visitors who themselves represented eight countries — there were guests from Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Korea. We saw it at a special evening at Remuera Baptist Church on Friday, February 11, where Korean, Samoan and Indian groups entertained us.

It’s always good to be reminded that we are part of a much larger family of Baptists. Of course the APBF is just one of several groupings of Baptists worldwide. But it is a huge grouping. It consists of 55 Baptist conventions from 20 countries, worshipping in more than 25,000 local churches from Sri Lanka to South Korea, Nepal to New Zealand, India to Fiji.

Praying and singing with Christian brothers and sisters from around the world gives us a taste of what heaven will be like.

Julie Belding is president of the Baptist Women’s Union of the South West Pacific.

Reprinted from the New Zealand Baptist magazine

Cuban Baptists Aim for Growth

Christians in Cuba, including Baptists, continue to make strenuous efforts to grow amidst obstacles and difficulties.

According to Jose Miguel Mendoza, vice president of the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba (CBCO), Protestant Christians on the Caribbean island nation aim to have one million new members and plant 100,000 new house churches over the next few years. The emphasis is being placed on house churches as the government has not been granting building permits for new church buildings. The initiative is being led by the CBCO, which invited other church bodies in Cuba to join this major evangelistic thrust.

The CBCO, one of four Baptist groups on the island, has planted 30 new house churches and baptized approximately 300 persons in the past year. This brings to 323 the number of churches in the CBCO, 70 of which are house churches. These house churches are to be distinguished from cell groups, which are already part of an existing congregation, and many of which meet in houses. Some churches, Mendoza says, have as many as 60 cell groups that meet in homes.

In order to meet the increased demand for pastors and church leaders, the convention has increased enrollment in its two seminaries in Havana and Santa Clara to approximately 400 students spread across the main campuses and satellite campuses in other provinces. After two years of basic training, the students choose their specialty, whether to be trained as pastors, mission workers, children’s workers, etc. Some students, Mendoza explains, are engaged in church planting during their training. All seminary students are placed to work alongside a congregation or to work in a
The Commission on the Status of Women, a commission of the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council, held its 56th annual session (CWS56) from February 27 – March 2, 2012, at the UN facilities in New York City. This year’s priority theme was, “The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.” This theme is one that is particularly important in light of the many challenges facing rural women, including the current combined effects of worldwide economic instability and climate change, both of which exacerbate the poverty that most rural women already experience.

The BWA Women’s Department (BWA WD) had an international team of 16 women that participated in the first week and beginning of the second week of sessions. Each morning the team participated in a morning devotion that was led by different faith groups and was held at the Church Center UN. After the devotion, a debriefing session was held after which the team members participated either in a side event or parallel event.

The side events were led by countries that have a Permanent Mission to the UN. In these sessions participants heard testimonies of rural women, as well as the good practices that have been put into action. The parallel events were led by different faith groups and were held at the Church Center UN. All those who attended these sessions had an opportunity to come together and discuss mutual concerns and develop strategies to overcome the challenges that still face rural women.

Although the theme of CSW56 did not specifically mention violence against women, it cannot be ignored that it exists. It has been established that poverty and inadequate living conditions do much to heighten the problem of violence against women. Many of the parallel sessions dealt with violence against women.

Several of the BWA WD team members discussed the possibility of presenting two parallel events next year. One of the things that the team members saw was the need to have a more evangelical response to the issue of violence against women. The planning of the sessions will take place in Chile during the BWA Annual Gathering.

Baptist women leaders at the UN, from left, Patsy Davis, executive director, BWA WD; Motunrayo Adegbilero, president, BWUA; Linda Weber, president, NABWU; Shirley Fair, treasurer, NABWU; and Judy Dozois, VP Prayer, NABWU

There are two other Baptist seminaries in Cuba. The Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba, the largest of the four conventions with more than 30,000 members, has a seminary in the east in Santiago, while the Free Will Baptist Convention of Cuba’s seminary is in Pinar del Rio at the western tip of the island.

The four Baptist groups will continue their annual 50 days of prayer in 2012, an initiative that began several years ago to forge unity among Baptists in Cuba as part of their “Cuba for Christ” campaign. Other Protestant church bodies have been invited to join the prayer vigil with their Baptist brothers and sisters. There are 52 church bodies and denominations in Cuba. The 50 days of prayer traditionally runs from Easter Sunday until Pentecost Sunday.
Accepted Recommendations

A number of recommendations brought by BWA General Secretary Neville Callam were adopted for further action by the Executive Committee. One recommendation was for moves to be made to broaden participation in BWA life by enabling more persons to be named to BWA committees and commissions and by encouraging more of the BWA's 222 member bodies to contribute to the organization. His proposal that only persons belonging to conventions and unions that contribute to the BWA should typically be provided assistance to attend meetings planned by the BWA is to be further considered.

On the matter of membership, Callam asked that the Constitution and Bylaws Committee “consider whether the Constitution should be altered to allow BWA Associate Membership solely for organized Baptist groups,” and that the committee review the appropriateness of persons holding personal BWA membership. The BWA leader noted that many churches, while they are keen to support the BWA, are not interested in holding membership within the organization. He asked that the Global Impact Church and Global Partner programs be treated as donor recognition programs rather than as membership schemes, as is currently the case.

Callam called for concerted action to be taken to resolve issues of conflict among Baptists in different parts of the world. Of particular concern is the protracted disunity between Telugu Baptists in India. One of the largest Baptist groups on the Indian subcontinent with approximately 500,000 members in about 900 churches, the Telugus splintered over...
issues of authority, administration and property and were suspended by the BWA in 2004. Callam asked that steps be taken that could lead to “the reintegration of the Telugu Baptists as active members in the BWA family.” Younger Telugus, he said, “are appealing to the BWA not to punish them for the sins of their seniors.”

The BWA leader also stated that even though there were “signs of reconciliation among Baptists in Kenya,” he requested prayer for the situation as he prepared to travel to the East African country where disunity continues to affect Baptists.

As a follow-up to a meeting between the leaders of the BWA and the Southern Baptist Convention in December 2011, the Executive Committee accepted a recommendation (Continued on next page)

Right: Treasurer Carolyn Fossen responds to questions on the BWA financial report

Facing page: BWA Executive and auxiliary committee members during meetings from March 4-7 in Falls Church, Virginia in the US

**Regional Reports**

The following are excerpts from reports presented by the six regional secretaries of the Baptist World Alliance at the BWA Executive Meetings in March
The All Africa Baptist Fellowship (AABF) has the challenge of getting Baptists in Africa actively involved in AABF and Baptist World Alliance life as well as making AABF financially viable and independent. Currently the AABF budget is heavily dependent on donor funds. The Central Africa sub-region and the Men’s Fellowship are some areas that need special prayers and support.

Africa is a large continent with diverse cultural expressions, poor infrastructure in most places, apparent poverty, and a prohibitively high cost of communication and movement within the continent. For this reason, some organizations have divided the continent into three regions. It is indeed an unequivocal fact that an organization with meager resources such as the AABF finds it difficult to operate in Africa as one continental body/region.

Because of the situation described above, there cannot be a complete and coherent mode of operation in the continent. The unity that Africa really needs cannot be truly felt in a practical manner among the member bodies.

Interaction of member bodies and their members takes place more often and more effectively at the sub-regional levels. Baptist continental meetings in Africa have always suffered from poor attendance. Most of those who attend come from older, more organized, and more developed sub-regions. The result of such imbalance in attendance is an imbalanced leadership distribution within the AABF. For example, in the term that just ended, the top leadership of all three auxiliaries, including the secretariat, was at one point in one sub-region, something that seems to undermine the continental identity and spirit.

To avoid this superficial unity, it might be imperative for Baptists in the continent and within the BWA to hear the Spirit, read the signs and do what will realistically foster real and effective fellowship and unity in Africa.

Most of the accomplishments that have been realized have been facilitated by the sub-regions and auxiliaries in their various endeavors to preach the gospel and show the love of Christ through social engagement. Women and Youth continue to remain the most active auxiliaries in the region. It is our prayer that men will also pick up. We pray that the spirit of cooperation, fellowship, and reaching out to the lost will continue.

Harrison Olan’g, president of Mount Meru University in Tanzania, is the immediate past BWA regional secretary for Africa and former general secretary of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship.

Africa is a large continent with diverse cultural expressions, poor infrastructure in most places, apparent poverty, and a prohibitively high cost of communication and movement within the continent.
30. The new site will have added features geared to appeal to Baptists of all ages and all major demographics. It will offer a window into the worldwide Baptist family and into the major ministry focus areas of the BWA.

A new BWA app has been released. Available on all major mobile phone platforms – namely Android handsets and iPhones – the app will enable Baptists from around the world to get access to resources from around the world; keep up with international meetings, including the Baptist World Congress and Baptist Youth World Conference; download videos and special messages; keep up with world news about Baptist work; and see reports from NGO meetings at the United Nations. Persons who download the app will also be able to share content with friends via Twitter, Facebook, and email.

The BWA has also inaugurated a new conference registration system. The new system makes it simpler and easier for participants to register for BWA Annual Gatherings.

(Continued on next page)

2011 was amongst the most eventful – each year seems to be getting more eventful!

The Oxford Terrace Baptist Church in Christchurch was one of many churches damaged by the February 2011 earthquake in New Zealand (Courtesy of Schwede66 via www.wikipedia.org)

2011 — An Eventful Year in Asia Pacific
By Bonny Resu

Natural Disasters
The year started with the Northeast Australian flood, described by news reporters as being of “biblical proportions” as it covered land the size of Germany and France. This was followed by an earthquake of 6.3 magnitude on the Richter scale which struck Christchurch city and its surroundings in New Zealand on February 22, causing massive destruction, injuries and a reported death toll of 181.

And while the world was slowly recovering from this, on March 11, right after the BWA Executive Committee meetings, a major earthquake measuring 9 on the Richter scale struck off the coast of Northeast Japan, triggering tsunami waves up to 10 meters high that swept inland, destroying anything that stood in their way. The official death toll on August 4, 2011, stood at 21,234 (Japan Fire Department). To make things worse, the nuclear power station at Fukushima was severely affected by the earthquake and tsunami. Radiation fears displaced about 160,000 people (50,000 households), many of whom cannot go back to their homes for at least 25 years or more.

(Continued on next page)
Baptist World Congresses, and Baptist Youth World
Conferences, among other meetings. The new package is
expected to improve efficiency while reducing the cost of
planning for meetings.

A new audio visual system has been installed in the BWA
main conference room, along with a Skype Premium and
Pragmatic Conference call account. Persons with an Internet
connection anywhere in the world can now participate
in meetings held at the BWA international offices in Falls
Church, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, DC.

A new Internet service using fiber optics is in place. This
improves Internet connectivity and offers necessary support
to some of the other changes that have been made. It will also

(Continued on next page)

Regional Reports

As if that was not enough, we heard of
earthquakes in relatively unknown (to the
world) Shan state in Northeast Myanmar,
Sikkim in Northeast India, typhoons and
cyclones in the Philippines, more flooding
in Eastern Pakistan, volcanic eruption on
Java Island and Sumatra of Indonesia, and
the list could go on.

Political Conflicts

Politically, the southern rim of
the Mediterranean Sea brimmed with
revolutions starting from Tunisia to Egypt
to Libya to Yemen and now boiling in Syria,
leading to the dislodging or death of many
long standing dictators/rulers. The war in
Afghanistan and Iraq is coming to some
closure with foreign troops withdrawing in
Iraq.

There are some signs of hope in
Myanmar as elections and release of
prisoners are taking place. The Kachin
Independence Army broke its truce with
the government (or vice versa) and the
Karen National Union has recently signed
a truce with the government which will
bring some relief and peace in the 62 year
old conflict.

The Naga peace talks between dominant
Naga groups and the government of India
are limping on. The church and various
NGOs are trying to broker peace between
the various feuding liberation factions,
efforts for which Dr. Wati Aier, former Asia
Pacific Baptist Federation Vice President,
was awarded the BWA Denton and Janice
Lotz Human Rights Award in 2011.

The Garo and Rabha tribal conflict in
Northeast India which has caused death
and destruction on both sides has now come
to a standstill, but the wounds of hatred
will take long to heal. The situation in the
Southern Philippines and Thailand between
Islamists and the government continues to
simmer, occasionally bursting into armed
conflicts or bombings. We must continue
to pray for all of these, for understanding,
considerateness, and a desire for peace
amongst people.

Economic Factors

The economic meltdown continues in
Europe and the USA is slowly limping back.
In many places around the world, inflation
and unemployment seem to be on the rise.
Countries in the Asia Pacific region are
not exempt. The paradoxes of the world’s
economy are baffling. For example, India,
which is the number five global economic
power, according to a recent survey, has
230 million people who go hungry every
day. Significantly, China overtook Japan as
the number two world economic power.

The list of categories of events for 2011
could go on. In the Chinese characters for Crisis (Wei Ji), one stands for danger and the other for opportunity. Yes, in the midst of uncertainties and pain and death, we have an opportunity to serve others and show the love of God to our fellow human beings as Baptists and as children of God!

Bonny Resu is BWA regional secretary for Asia and general secretary of the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation

2012 is a significant year for some Caribbean countries as they celebrate their jubilee as sovereign nations, while others are still shackled by colonial powers. There were both lamentations and celebrations in a number of Caribbean countries in 2011 as political leadership was decided. Notwithstanding the political challenges in the region it is noteworthy that democracy is alive and well. But while we celebrated a relatively smooth transition of power in most cases, there were concerns about political upheavals experienced in some countries.

Any reflection on the past year in the Caribbean region will no doubt be colored by the challenges spawned by the current period of global uncertainties. The ongoing global economic and financial crisis continues to thwart socio-economic development to the point where the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned that Caribbean countries will continue to struggle and governments will have to tighten their economic spending. David Vegara, IMF Deputy Director for the Western Hemisphere, puts it this way: “The Caribbean region continues to struggle to recover from a long and protracted recession. Drags from fiscal consolidation and higher energy prices continue to constrain private demand, while the recovery in tourism flows remains tepid amid high unemployment in advanced economies.”

In addition to the socio-politico-economic realities of the region, the Caribbean continues to struggle with the evil of corruption in low and high places, human trafficking, drug use and export, kidnapping, as well as the evil of imperialism in some areas. Clearly, the period under review has been one of mixed fortunes.

It is within this context that the mission of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship is exercised directly and indirectly through its member bodies. Caribbean Baptists are cognizant of the fact that our salvation has not taken us out of the world but places us in the world to make a difference and to offer an alternative lifestyle to the world. While preserving the essentials of the Faith, Caribbean Baptists are challenged to be creative and innovative in responding not only to the socio-politico-economic realities of the region but also to the challenges posed by global emerging trends such as science and technology, urbanization, globalization, post modernity and pluralism, among others. In 2011, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Bahamas were affected by Hurricane Irene. While the Turks and Caicos Islands were only affected by flooding, some islands in the Bahamas were badly affected in terms of loss of roofs, damage to road networks and agriculture. Letters of solidarity were sent to the union/convention of the respective areas affected.
result in reduced costs as the system is much faster yet less expensive than the BWA’s previous Internet service. BWA staff demonstrated some of the technological changes and upgrades being made during meetings of the Executive Committee in early March.

**New Member Body**

The Reformed Baptist Convention in Rwanda was accepted as the newest member body of the BWA. The Baptist group, comprising 127,001 members in 80 churches, brings to 222 the number of Baptist conventions and unions in 120 countries that hold membership within the BWA. It is the fourth church body in Rwanda to become a full member of the BWA, joining the Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda, the Community of Christian Churches in Africa, and the Union of Baptist Churches in Rwanda.

(Continued on page 21)

Marilee White, *left*, a member of the Promotion and Development Advisory Committee and of the Commission on Social and Environmental Justice, converses with BWA Women’s Department Director Patsy Davis.

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**Regional Reports**

as well as to member bodies soliciting prayers and financial assistance.

While the CBF affirms its autonomy, we are aware that we do share common missional goals and objectives with other fraternal bodies. As such, over the period under review conversations were held with two such bodies with a view to formalize partnerships around mutually agreed projects. These include a quest to develop a Centre for Caribbean Baptist Studies in collaboration with the United Theological College of the West Indies. Among the goals of this centre will be to collect and store documentation in all forms of Caribbean Baptist life and work, history and thought. It will also encourage research into all aspects of Baptist life and work both in the Caribbean region and the Caribbean Diaspora in Europe and North America, as well as areas in Central and South America peopled by descendants of Caribbean peoples.

Everton Jackson is the BWA regional secretary for the Caribbean and executive secretary/treasurer for the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship.

A high point of 2011 was the European Baptist Federation (EBF) Executive and Council in Bethlehem and Nazareth, respectively, with around 35 of our member bodies represented. We were there to celebrate with Israeli Baptists 100 years of witness in the Holy Land. At the same time it was a significant learning experience about the Arab Baptist communities which make up our two member bodies, the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel (Israel “proper”) and the Evangelical Council of Local Churches in the Holy Land (West Bank and Gaza).

In Bethlehem we were able to host an evening for local pastors and church leaders and their families. We found out something of their opportunities and many challenges in their witness in a situation of restriction and injustice, with the result that many Christians are now leaving the West Bank. Their message to us is not to forget the “living stones” of the city where Jesus was born, and the land in which he walked. We were also able to visit the Bethlehem Bible College, which has several Baptists on its staff and which not only offers theological courses, but also has devised ways in which it can support the local economy, and try to help those in need, especially those who are part of the 50 percent unemployment statistic of Palestine.

Our Council then took place in Nazareth which is the center of Israeli Baptist life. As well as celebrating with our Israeli brothers and sisters their centenary of faithful witness, we were able to visit the Nazareth Baptist (High) School which has become known and respected for its high academic standards and its clear Christian ethos.

Because of the political situation in the Middle East, none of the Baptist leaders of neighboring Arab countries were able to travel to Israel for the Council. They sent their greetings by video, and it brought home to the delegates the tragic divisions of the region. But a positive highlight of the Council was hearing from the founders of the organization Musalah (“reconciliation”), one a Messianic Jew and one a Palestinian evangelical Christian. Musalah works actively to promote what
result the Baptist church there is likely to receive greater official recognition from the Bahrain authorities.

The EBF Executive has committed itself to hold its March 2012 meeting in Amman, Jordan, preceded by a visit from the EBF president and general secretary to Egypt. We have invited all the Middle East Baptist leaders to join us in Jordan for a consultation so we can learn firsthand the situation of each country, and express the solidarity, support and prayer of the EBF for them at this critical time.

In the past decade there has been an increasing number of Karen, Chin and Kachin refugees from Myanmar/Burma moving into some countries of the European Union (EU). Many of these refugees are Baptists. The Scandinavian Baptist unions, especially Norway and Denmark, have led the way in responding

(Continued on next page)
There are now more than 480,000 Baptist members in more than 550 churches in the French-speaking African nation.

The convention was formed in 2005 and has offices in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda.

Congress, Conferences and Meetings

The theme for the 2015 Baptist World Congress in Durban, South Africa, will be aimed at capturing the ideas behind “Ubuntu,” a South African word which, among other things, places a premium on dignity, compassion, humaneness and respect for the humanity of others, dictating good attitudes and shared concern.

Registration for the 16th Baptist Youth World Conference in Singapore from July 17-21, 2013, begins by the end of March this year. At least 4,500 young people from approximately 100 countries are expected to attend the conference. Speakers, Bible study leaders, housing and other important details are to be confirmed by the end of May.

to the special practical and spiritual needs of these refugees and welcoming them and their churches into the life of the Baptist unions. An EBF Network has been formed to share experience and good practice in welcoming and supporting the refugees, whose lives can be particularly difficult in some of the newer EU countries such as the Czech Republic and Romania. The Sarka Valley Community Church based in the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague has received funding from the EU Grundvig Project to support refugees in the Czech Republic. A group that recently arrived in Finland may well double the size of the Baptist union (Finnish-speaking) there!

The EBF has been invited to hold preliminary theological conversations with the state church of Armenia, the “mono-physite” Armenian Apostolic Church, and we hope to have an initial meeting later this year. This reflects much improved relationships between this ancient church in the oldest Christian nation on earth and the Armenian Baptists.

Europe and the Middle East face many challenges at the present time, economic, cultural and political. Our vision as the EBF is to support, resource and encourage our member unions and churches at this critical time, to speak into the public squares and marketplaces of their societies in an informed and biblically relevant way. In this we are inspired by Thomas Helwys who 400 years ago took his plea for universal religious freedom directly to the English King, thus being courageous in speaking truth to power in the name of Christ.

Tony Peck is BWA regional secretary for Europe and general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, which also includes Baptist unions in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Below: Baptists of the Middle East
(Courtesy of Middle East Bible Outreach)

Radical Latino

By Alberto Prokopchuk

The “Radical Latino” project sends young Baptists from different countries in Latin America to reach children, adolescents, young people and adults for Christ. They endeavor to implement the project in schools and universities, big cities, smaller communities, and in the streets. Activities include literacy education, sports, community service, support of nursing homes, care for children and much more.

The young people go through a selection process, training in Spanish and Portuguese, and then each works in at least three countries in Latin America. Sustaining a “radical” costs US$300 per month in addition to health insurance.

During each cycle, which runs from
BICTE, the Baptist International Conference on Theological Education, held every five years, will be held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, from June 28-30, 2013. The last BICTE was in Prague, Czech Republic, in 2008. It immediately precedes the Annual Gathering which runs July 1-6 at the same venue.

Two retiring members of staff, both of whom retire in July, were recognized for their service. Paul Montacute from Britain has worked with the BWA for 22 years as director of Baptist World Aid and was, for part of that time, concurrently, the director of the BWA Youth Department. Linda Falimy, originally from Indonesia, came to the BWA in 1981 and worked in the Communications and Promotion and Development divisions.

January to October each year, the young people pass through seven stages, starting with registration and ending with evaluation. In between, the youth receive training in cross-cultural mission, cultural adaptation and supervised practical training, several placements, and meeting and sharing of experiences, concluding with evaluation and closure of that cycle.

During 2011, the work of Radical Latino focused on Central America, particularly Panama, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Some 113 churches received support. More than 10,000 persons were evangelized. More than 4,700 made decisions for Christ resulting in 111 baptisms. In addition, almost 9,000 children were reached and 781 leaders were trained.

Alberto Prokopchuk is the BWA regional secretary for Latin America and the general secretary of the Union of Baptists in Latin America.

Diverse Storytelling

By George Bullard

Baptists throughout North America are very diverse, perhaps more diverse than any one convention or conference of Baptists understands. While not all Baptist conventions and conferences are members of the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF) and the Baptist World Alliance, the two dozen of the 35 who are members represent great theological, ecclesiological, and missiological diversity.

We are at a point where we do not deeply know the story of each convention or conference in the region. We may become myopic as to who Baptists really are in North America. During the past year the NABF engaged in a pilot storytelling project, in collaboration with the Associated Baptist Press, to begin telling the stories of what is happening among Baptists.

A Storytelling Network is being formed that we hope will empower an ongoing movement of storytelling so that we might celebrate our diversity as Baptists in North America, learn more about the work and ministry of one another, and find higher ground for collaboration.

One goal that will be proposed is that the number of stories and their distribution channels will increase. Another is that a greater diversity of Baptist feature story news writers will be recruited to help tell these stories. We will be asking our member bodies to be more proactive in helping us discover the stories that need to be told so we will not be shortsighted concerning the richness and diversity of the Baptist movement in our own region.

2014 is the 50th anniversary of the formation of the NABF. It is also the 200th anniversary of the Triennial Convention among Baptists in the United States. The Triennial Convention was founded in 1814 with headquarters in Philadelphia. It met every three years and was the first national Baptist denomination in the United States. In 1845, it experienced a schism over the issue of slavery and mission and led to the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention.

During 2012 the NABF determined to express our support and solidarity with Baptists in Mexico. NABF is particularly concerned about the Mexican and United States border issues, and the level of violence in some communities in Mexico and its impact on Baptist people, leaders, and congregations. To this end a letter of prayerful support was sent to the Baptist leaders in Mexico, and NABF Vice President Don Sewell traveled during July 2011 to the annual meeting of Mexican Baptists to personalize our support and bring fraternal greetings.

George Bullard is BWA regional secretary for North America and general secretary of the North American Baptist Fellowship.
A new director of Baptist World Aid (BWAid), the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance, has been appointed.

Rothangliani Rema Chhangte, liaison for Burmese refugees with American Baptist Home Mission Societies in the United States, was approved by the Executive Committee of the BWA at its March meeting in Falls Church, Virginia, close to Washington, DC.

Chhangte’s appointment came after an international search for the head of the division.

The new BWAid director has deep Baptist roots. She served on the BWA General Council from 2001-2007 and has attended a number Baptist World Congresses and several Baptist Youth World Conferences. She was pastor of the Woodland Baptist Church from 1994-2000 and, prior to that, was assistant pastor of Chestnut Street Baptist Church, both in Philadelphia in the state of Pennsylvania.

Chhangte has worked with a number of church-affiliated organizations. She was, at various times, program analysis coordinator with Church World Service; director of ecumenical formation at American Baptist Churches USA; executive director of the Asian American Youth Association; and administrator at the Oxford Conference on Christian Faith and Economics.

Since 2006, she has been a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and was a member of the Executive Committee and Governing Board of the National Council of Churches USA from 2001-2007, co-chairing its Interfaith Commission between 2004 and 2007.

She holds a Master of Divinity degree from Palmer Theological Seminary and an MBA degree from Eastern University, two Baptist-affiliated schools near Philadelphia. She was also a business major in her Bachelor’s degree program at another Baptist school, Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota. In addition, she holds diplomas from the Oxford Graduate Summer School of Theology in the United Kingdom and the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies in Switzerland.

She received a Human Rights Award from the Human Relations Commission of the City of Philadelphia in 1998 and a Community Service Award from the Association of Asian American Educators in 1996.

Chhangte takes up her appointment on August 1. She succeeds Paul Montacute who retires in July.
Edgar Palacios, cofounder of the Lutheran University of El Salvador and former coordinator and executive director of the Permanent Committee of the National Debate for Peace in El Salvador (CPDN), is the 2012 recipient of the Baptist World Alliance Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award.

The announcement of the award was made during the BWA Executive Committee meeting in Falls Church, Virginia, in the United States.

Palacios is being recognized for his role in helping to negotiate peace in El Salvador during the civil war of 1980-92. During the struggle for peace, Palacios’ life, along with those of other pastors and church leaders, was at great risk. In 1989, he took refuge in the German Embassy and a United Nations safe house in San Salvador, the country’s capital, after being informed that he and several other clergy members and social leaders were on a government hit list. Six Jesuit priests were assassinated during the government’s repressive campaign.

He played key roles in the CPDN, part of the social movement in the Central American country, leading the organization through one of the most turbulent periods in El Salvador’s modern history. In the period 1989-1992, Palacios testified at various times as a representative of the churches and the CPDN before the United States Congress and the United Nations on the situation in El Salvador. In 1990, he was co-president of a peace conference relating to El Salvador in the Netherlands.

Ordained to the Christian ministry in 1985, Palacios served several Baptist congregations in El Salvador, did stints with two congregations in Mexico City, and currently serves as associate pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, DC, in the US.

Palacios is a cofounder and a former executive secretary of the National Council of Churches of El Salvador and was a representative of the Historical Protestant Churches of El Salvador. He taught at several universities, colleges and seminaries in El Salvador, Mexico and the US, including at the Baptist Institute of Theological Formation, Central American University “Jose Simeon Cañas,” the El Salvador National University Law School, the Theological Institute of Graduate Studies of Mexico, Chapingo University in Mexico and the John Leland Center for Theological Studies in Virginia, USA. He helped to found the Lutheran University of El Salvador in 1988.

He is the recipient of several other awards. In 1998, he was presented with merit awards for peace by the Salvadoran Civil Society and the the Baptist Association of El Salvador. In addition, he has been recognized for his work for peace and justice by the National Council of Churches of El Salvador, the Lutheran Church of El Salvador, the Community of Marginalized People, the Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, and the Austrian Foundation.

The 2012 BWA Human Rights Award, named after immediate past General Secretary Denton Lotz and wife Janice, will be presented during the BWA Annual Gathering in Santiago, Chile, in July.
A building housing a school for 200 preschool, kindergarten and primary students and an orphanage for 50 children was officially opened and dedicated in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on January 7.

Facilities are being put in place for conductive education and development for 10-20 disabled children. In addition, there will be vocational training for 100 young people in information technology, culinary arts and cooking, sewing and tailoring, and in English language. There is also a chapel and conference center.

The complex, named “Source of Light,” cost approximately US$1.5 million to construct. The majority of the funds were provided by the Baptist World Alliance through its relief and development arm, Baptist World Aid (BWAid). Other contributions came from the Virginia Baptist Mission Board (VBMB). Hungarian Baptist Aid (HBAid) supervised the construction in association with the Haiti Baptist Convention (HBC), which owns the complex.

“This was the fulfillment of a dream brought about by many years of prayer and planning,” said BWAid Director, Paul Montacute, who officially handed the keys of the complex to Eugene Gideon, president of the HBC. “It took the earthquake to bring all the ideas together,” he said.

Source of Light meets an urgent need for schools in Haiti’s capital as approximately 90 percent of the schools in and around Port-au-Prince were either severely damaged or destroyed by the

A Testimony

Emmanuel Pierre, general secretary of the Haiti Baptist Convention, was kidnapped by armed men in the wee hours of September 29, 2011, and released in the afternoon on that same day. The following is a testimony of his life and ordeal.

My name is Emmanuel Pierre. I was born in Trou du Nord in Northeast Haiti on December 26, 1952. I grew up in a Christian family and I am the second child in a family of seven.

My father died at the time that I finished elementary school and was ready to enter high school. I was then 14 years old. Without a father, I was forced to stay home during a school year because my mother could not afford the cost of sending seven kids to school.

But one year later, I was very fortunate to be granted a scholarship by the Baptist Mission scholarship program at the high school run by the Baptist denomination, led at that time by the Baptist missionary, C. S. Kelly.

At that Christian school, I had a good spiritual formation and was positively impacted by the lives of the Christian teachers. There I made the commitment to follow Christ as my Savior. Later, I choose to go to seminary for theological studies.

Upon completion of my theological studies, I was called to serve two Baptist churches simultaneously, the Baptist church of Robillard and the Baptist church of Petite-Anse. Both churches are affiliated with the Haiti Baptist Convention. I ministered to them eleven years. Then I received a call to serve as general secretary of the convention. During those pastorates, God powerfully used my ministry to direct people’s lives toward a hopeful future.

Besides my theological training, I also have the privilege of having a diploma in law studies from the Law School of Cap-Haitian. In addition, I also took classes in Administration and Management at the University Roi Henri Christophe of Cap-Haitian. At that time, I got married to Josette Previl. From our union were born
Nancy Emmanuella and Matondo, who died prematurely right after his birth. To compensate the loss, Josette and I decided to adopt Patricia, our second daughter.

When I was called to serve as general secretary, it was not easy for me to depart from the communities and people I had served and befriended during my pastorate. However, I surrendered myself to God’s will.

Since the beginning of my ministry as general secretary in 1992, I have been through valleys and mountains to answer the call. I have had tremendous experiences in terms of conflict resolutions, in terms of dealing with tough situations of political unrest and economic hardships, in terms of surviving car accidents on dangerous roads, and in terms of facing bandits’ attacks. The last one occurred on September 29, 2011.

It was two o’clock in the morning when suddenly I heard two gunshots at the window of our bedroom. Then two gunmen forced the entry door, entered our room, and took me out across the street with my eyes blindfolded. The kidnappers required a ransom of US$50,000 for my release. They kept me, with bound arms and feet, in an unknown place. During fourteen hours, I waited, courageously and with a firm faith, to hear their final decision.

This tough trial led me to the conclusion that God’s silence in difficult times does not mean that you have been abandoned. Through this experience, I now understand that everything is possible for one who believes.

Thanks to God’s faithfulness and to the fervent prayers of the worldwide Christian family, I was miraculously released, just like apostle Peter was, without paying the ransom. This experience has led me to a renewed commitment to God and has fired me up to continue my ministry as my part in the building of the kingdom of God.

I want here to express my gratefulness to all who have expressed their words of compassion to me and to my family and to all those who have prayed for us. I also want to express my gratitude to the police force of my country for the good job they performed in cooperation with the Haiti Baptist Convention leadership.

*Translated from the French by Joel Dorsinville
Religious intolerance has become more severe and widespread, according to Suzan Johnson Cook, United States Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom. Johnson Cook made these remarks during the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Window on the World (WOW) Banquet in Arlington, Virginia, in the United States, on March 3.

The ambassador noted that several dominant trends characterize restrictions on religious freedom — government repression of religious rights and religious groups, violent extremist attacks that exacerbate sectarian tensions, lack of rule of law regarding violations of religious freedom, apostasy and blasphemy laws, rising anti-Semitism and Islamaphobia, and restrictions on religious attire and expression.

Johnson Cook said that “religious freedom is pivotal to peaceful, prosperous and secure societies,” and that “many conflicts in the world today are fueled by religious intolerance, with governments sometimes exacerbating religious tensions through inaction, restrictive religious legislation, court judgments, and police enforcement targeting certain religious groups.” She pointed to research showing that a “third of the global population live where there are government restrictions on religion or where there are acts of social hostility targeting religious groups.”

“High levels of government restriction on religious freedom and societal violence go hand in hand,” she emphasized. “Where there is religious freedom, there is more stability” and “a healthy, strong, and vibrant civil society can only exist where freedom of religion is respected and protected.”

The ambassador appealed to international religious organizations such as the BWA “to build bridges across religious differences [and] to work together against religious hatred, violence and repression.” Faith groups and their leaders, she said, “are often best positioned to spread the message of tolerance and reconciliation” as often they are a “crucial thread in the economic and political fabric of society.” Religious organizations such as the BWA “have a stake in having the freedom to operate” and can do so by “promoting mutual respect and freedom for their own faith and for others.”

Johnson Cook, an ordained Baptist pastor, is the first woman, first African American, and the third person appointed as US Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom. The position was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to promote religious freedom as a foreign policy of the US, and to advocate on the behalf of individuals viewed as persecuted on account of religion. In addition to the post of ambassador, the act led to the creation of a bipartisan US Commission on International Religious Freedom and a Special Adviser on International Religious Freedom within the National Security Council.

Tony Peck, BWA regional secretary for Europe and general secretary for the European Baptist Federation, told the banquet audience of both the blessings and challenges faced by churches in Europe related to the integration of immigrants, particularly refugees. Refugees from Myanmar, for instance, have had profound influence on Baptist churches in Denmark, Finland.
Samson Chowdhury, a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1985 to 1990, died in Singapore on January 5, just short of his 86th birthday.

Chowdhury was elected president of the Bangladesh Baptist Church Fellowship (BBCF) a dozen times, and was honorary general secretary for 14 years, between 1956 and 1969. He is a former president of both the National Church Council of Bangladesh and the National Evangelical Alliance.

Chowdhury was one of Bangladesh’s leading businessmen and industrialists. At the time of his death, he was chairman of Square Group, a company he cofounded in the 1950s. That company grew into one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh, with approximately 28,000 employees in various industries, such as cosmetics, textiles, agricultural products, information technology, health services, and media.

In addition to Square Group, Chowdhury served as chair of several other companies, including Mutual Trust Bank, Astras, Micro Industries Development and Services, and Central Depository Bangladesh. He held directorships on a number of other companies’ boards.

Chowdhury was the founding president of the Bangladesh Association of Publicly Listed Companies, was president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries from 1996-1997, and was chairman of the Bangladesh chapter of Transparency International from 2004-2007.

He received a number of awards and recognitions. He was named Business Executive of the Year by the American Chamber in Bangladesh in 1998; was recognized by the Daily Star and DHL Worldwide Express as the Best Entrepreneur of Bangladesh for 2000-2001; received the Banker’s Forum Award in 2005 for Business Ethics, Honesty and Transparency; was recognized by the National Board of Revenue as one of the top 10 tax payers of Bangladesh since 2005; and received Commercial Important Person status from the government of Bangladesh.

“Samson H. Chowdhury has made immense contributions to the development of various industrial sectors in the country,” said Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Chowdhury was born in 1926 and, after completing his education in India, returned to what was then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and settled at Ataikula village in Pabna district where his father worked as a medical officer. In 1952, he started a small pharmacy in Ataikula village in northwest Bangladesh. He ventured into a partnership pharmaceutical company with three friends in 1958. That partnership later became the Square Group.

In addition to being a BWA vice president, Chowdhury served in other areas of the global Baptist organization, including on the BWA General Council, the Executive Committee, the Baptist World Aid Committee, the Promotion and Development Committee, and the Memorial Committee.

“We remember Mr. Chowdhury’s commitment to Christ, his selfless service and his exemplary deportment,” BWA General Secretary Neville Callam said in tribute. “His dedication to the

(Continued on next page)
ministry of the BWA was evident in his generosity in supporting the BWA mission.”

“He was a rare example of honesty in business,” said Anis Ud Dowla, chairman of ACI Group in Bangladesh.

He leaves wife, Anita, sons, Samuel, Anjan, and Tapan, who is president of the BBCF and a member of the BWA General Council, the Executive Committee and the Budget and Finance Committee, and daughter, Ratna Patra.

Funeral services were held on January 6 in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, and burial on January 7 in his home district of Pabna.

**Bruce King,**

former secretary of the Baptist Union of New South Wales (NSW), national director of Baptist World Aid Australia (BWAA), and a member of the Baptist World Aid Executive Committee of the Baptist World Alliance, died on November 5, 2011, in NSW, at age 85.

King served as secretary of the Western Districts Baptist Association before being named secretary of the BU Women’s Department, died on March 1 in Wimberley, Texas, in the United States. She was 97 years old.

Fling grew up in Texas and graduated from East Texas State University, with studies also at Baylor University.

After her marriage at age 19 to Baptist pastor, evangelist and missionary Robert Cobb Fling in June 1934, they traveled to the BWA’s Baptist World Congress in Berlin, Germany, for their honeymoon.

She became actively involved in the Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) of the Southern Baptist Convention, volunteering in a number of capacities. She was elected recording secretary of the organization in 1957 and was chosen as president in 1963, serving until 1969. During her tenure as president she led a reorganization of the WMU and helped the women’s group to focus on Christian social ministries and racial justice.

Fling and her husband led churches in several states, including Texas, Alabama, Louisiana, Oklahoma and New York. While in New York, they helped to plant the Westchester Baptist Church in Pleasantville. During this time she was elected to lead the NABWU, a continental union of the BWA Women’s Department, and became a board member of the American Bible Society for many years.

In 1967, she was the first woman to be elected to an office in the Baptist General Convention of Texas, as second vice president.

In 1976, Helen and Robert Fling extended their mission efforts to Germany where Robert served as pastor of the English-language Baptist congregation in Munich. Both were involved in the European Baptist Convention, a fellowship of English-language churches and missions in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Central and South America.

**Helen Long Fling,**

former head of the North American Baptist Women’s Union (NABWU) and a founding member of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Women’s Committee, precursor to the BWA Women’s Department, died on March 1 in Wimberley, Texas, in the United States. She was 97 years old.

Fling grew up in Texas and graduated from East Texas State University, with studies also at Baylor University.

After her marriage at age 19 to Baptist pastor, evangelist and missionary Robert Cobb Fling in June 1934, they traveled to the BWA’s Baptist World Congress in Berlin, Germany, for their honeymoon.

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In 1976, Helen and Robert Fling extended their mission efforts to Germany where Robert served as pastor of the English-language Baptist congregation in Munich. Both were involved in the European Baptist Convention, a fellowship of English-language churches and missions in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Central and South America.
a former president and general secretary of the Seventh Day Baptist (SDB) General Conference, died on October 4, 2011, in Arcadia, California, in the United States. He was 82 years old.

May, a former member of the General Council of the Baptist World Alliance, was a physician who, among other appointments, was chief of staff of the Methodist Hospital in Arcadia. He previously served as a flight surgeon in the US Air Force from 1954-1956 and worked in his own private practice for more than 50 years. Active in his community, he was a member of the board of the Arcadia School District from 1971-1983.

He was elected president of the SDB General Conference in 1967 and served that body as its part time executive secretary from 1999-2003.

May earned his medical degree from the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

He leaves wife, Nancy, and sons, Charles, Cass, Matthew, and Pete.

Funeral services were held October 22 at the Riverside SDB Church in California.

Lloyd Householder,

a past assistant vice president for the Office of Communications of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (now LifeWay Christian Resources), and a former member of the Communications Committee of the Baptist World Alliance, died on January 30. He was 82 years old.

Householder was named director of the Sunday School Board’s Office of Communications in 1977 before being promoted to assistant vice president in 1987.

He served as president of both the Religion Communicators Council and the Baptist Communicators Association and held membership in the Public Relations Society of America, among other professional public relations organizations.

He earned degrees from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

In addition to being a member of the BWA Communications Committee, Householder served on the Congress Program Committee that helped plan the 1995 Baptist World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

He leaves wife, Rose Marie, son, Thom, and daughter, Ashley.

A. H. Jeffree James,

president of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) from 1971-1972, has died.

Born in England in 1915, James served with the Protestant Truth Society in that country before migrating to South Africa in 1945, continuing his work with the Protestant Association of South Africa.

In addition to being president of the BUSA, James served on its National Executive Committee for many years. He played a key role in the promotion of Baptist ministry within the Western Province Baptist Association, including the development of the Cape Town Baptist Seminary in its formative years. He helped to found Pinelands Baptist Church and other Baptist congregations.

A former chairman of the Bible Institute of South Africa, James also was instrumental in the formation of the Cornerstone Christian College, formerly known as the Cape Evangelical Bible Institute, and of George Whitfield College.

James opened a Christian bookshop in the heart of Cape Town and developed a partnership with InterVarsity Press which included printing locally and co-publishing several titles. He authored the book, A century of witness against racial discrimination and social injustice: Resolutions of the Baptist Union of South Africa 1895-1987.

He was predeceased by wife, Irene, in 1989, and leaves sons, Ivan, Hugh and Martin.

William Isbell, Jr.,

a former director of the Baptist World Alliance Men’s Department, died on October 4, 2011, in Bessemer, Alabama, in the United States. He was 89 years old.

Isbell, a veterinarian, served Baptist men in various capacities over the years, including as secretary of the Baptist Brotherhood of the Alabama Baptist Convention for 13 years, during which time he developed the Royal Ambassadors Boys’ Camp at Shocco Springs; as director of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Brotherhood department from 1968-1977; and as an executive of Texas Baptist Men, where he was instrumental in building a hospitality house for prisoners’ families to use during visits to Huntsville, location for the headquarters of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Isbell was BWA Men’s Department Director from 1987-1991. During this time a Baptist Men’s Manual for Baptist men’s groups around the world was published.

He is survived by his wife, Marynel; son, William III; and daughter, Marcia Faye.

Funeral services were held on October 7 at Hunter Street Baptist Church and October 8 at the Memorial Park Cemetery in Auburn, Alabama.

Lewis May,

a former president and general secretary of the Seventh Day Baptist (SDB) General Conference, died on October 4, 2011, in Arcadia, California, in the United States. He was 82 years old.

May, a former member of the General Council of the Baptist World Alliance, was a physician who, among other appointments, was chief of staff of the Methodist Hospital in Arcadia. He previously served as a flight surgeon in the US Air Force from 1954-1956 and worked in his own private practice for more than 50 years. Active in his community, he was a member of the board of the Arcadia School District from 1971-1983.

He was elected president of the SDB General Conference in 1967 and served that body as its part time executive secretary from 1999-2003.

May earned his medical degree from the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

He leaves wife, Nancy, and sons, Charles, Cass, Matthew, and Pete.

Funeral services were held October 22 at the Riverside SDB Church in California.
With these words Justice C. Anderson prefaces his 637 page tome entitled, An Evangelical Saga: Baptists and Their Precursors in Latin America. The book, the first and only one in its class in the English language, relates and analyzes the rapid growth of Baptist and Evangelical influence in Latin America.

After so much recognition about the “center of gravity” of Christianity moving to the Southern regions of the globe, this Baptist history carefully recorded by Anderson fills in a vacuum in historical literature in the Anglo-speaking world. The book is of interest to students and professors of Baptist history and Latin American Christianity, including missiologists, church historians and global denominational leaders.

James Leo Garrett, in the Foreword, locates this book “in the face of the convergence of three Christian phenomena. First…that the center of gravity for Christianity is shifting from Europe and North America to the Southern hemisphere. Second, there is the changing face of Christianity in Latin America. Third, the Baptists of North America and most of Europe until recently had little knowledge of the origins and growth of Baptists in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the same is possibly true of most general historians of Christianity, for the entire story until recent years have been largely confined to the Spanish and Portuguese language.”

Here there is a history well researched and investigated by someone who has been a participant in its development for many years as a missionary in the Latin American region, and as a respected historian of the missionary movement in his own country. “I have chosen the title saga,” Anderson finishes his preface, because this history is like “a modern heroic narrative of historic figures and events that have become legendary.” In this case, the legend includes the author.

For all who participated in it, and for all who really want to get to know it, Anderson has written a piece of Baptist history worth recalling and worth reading. Muchas gracias, Justo!

Daniel Carro is professor of divinity, John Leland Center for Theological Studies, Virginia, USA
Confronting Our Fears

It seems the best place these days to do reflective thinking is while flying for long stretches of time. It was on a recent flight that I had opportunity to reflect on some common themes I have been hearing as I have traveled. It always astounds me how similar the conversations are throughout the world even though circumstances, culture, language, perspectives, and goals all are unique to those regions.

What has caught my attention is how often fear, and its derivatives, attempts to dominate our minds. Suppose I were to hand out a slip of paper and ask you to write down your answer to this question: “What scares you?” Do you know how you would answer that question? What are you afraid of?

And then suppose we collect those slips of paper and I read them out loud. What words would fill the room? Would these words be financial struggles, unemployment, dying, pain, the loss of people we love, certain illnesses, personal failure of any kind, being unwanted, living alone in the world, discovering my life was meaningless? What if after each of these I paused and asked, “Please raise your hand if this one is something you have feared.” I think many of us would raise our hands more than once.

Maybe for some, fear may be too big a word to use in an exercise like this and they would prefer to replace the word “fear” with the word “dread.” Then we would reframe the question to be: “Is there anything that you dread?” Something you hope you won’t have to face? Or something you know you will face but don’t want to? To be honest, fear has many faces and the true name of what some of us feel is really fear.

Now fear is something that God has wired into us that often can be good and healthy, but unfortunately can mutate into something monstrous. It is impossible to calculate the world of damage our fears have done. When we are afraid we are more likely to do harmful things, or fail to do right things for the people around us. You have noticed, as well as I, that hatred is poisoning our world because we are frightened by finances, religions, shifts of power, suspicions of intent, and on and on we could go.

It gets even worse as those who speak words of fear do so to appeal to the fears of others and to stoke hatred in them. It is the nature of fear to weaken, if not to damage, relationships. To be anxious about my needs is to be less anxious about your needs. When we feel threatened we hardly even notice what is threatening people around us and we are quicker to resent. Some of us disappear inside ourselves. Individuals do this. Nations do this. Denominational organizations do this.

So, what can help us? I know what won’t help us. It won’t help for anyone to tell us, “Don’t be afraid.” Have you ever been with a child who is scared to death and your best idea to help is to say, “Don’t be afraid?” It is a waste of breath. Frightened people, anxious people, don’t need to be told not to be anxious. What they do need, in one way or another, is new vision, a new way of seeing that which is true, a new way of learning to gaze, to let the heart and the life gaze on something that outshines all else. In Psalm 27 we are told: “I see my fears...but one thing I ask for and only one, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord.”

In the past several months I have had opportunity to be with those who have looked at the mess, and sometimes even horror, that is around them. Fear and withdrawal would have been understandable responses. The most recent was a trip to the Brazilian Baptist Convention in Iguasu Falls, Brazil. It was on mission night when I learned how the Brazilian Baptists, in cooperation with the police, developed a ministry to go into the poorest, most drug-infested, and violent area of Sao Paulo called “Crack Land.” This was an area no self-respecting person would dare venture. It was a frightening place.

Yet, the convention did not back away. They created a new vision for that area. Instead of calling it “Crack Land,” they had a vision it could become “Christ Land.” In two years more than 1,000 have been baptized in that community. At the convention I witnessed 48 being baptized from Crack Land. While the baptism was taking place a 75-member choir made up of former drug addicts and dealers from Crack Land led the service in song and testimonies. Rather than responding out of fear and withdrawing from the challenge, Brazilian Baptists caught a new vision that is changing lives, as well as an entire community. And as an entire community is being made new, so is a Baptist convention.

It can be dark inside fear. I would never suggest that we not be afraid. But perhaps we can hear another voice. Perhaps we can suggest to each other that it might make all the difference if we were to shift the gaze of our heart to look more and more on the beauty of the Lord and to seek more and more the presence that helps us dream new dreams and see new vision. I am grateful to those with whom I have visited in the name of the BWA in recent months for reminding me of this great truth. May we all be so courageous.
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