Baptists Mark 400 Years in 2009 - see page 22

A CELEBRATION OF BAPTIST UNITY

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Cover Photos

History, culture, language, race and ethnicity play a major role in the creation of various Baptist groups. Yet a strong desire for fellowship unites Baptists.

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

Myanmar Refugee Visits BWA Office

Htoo May, a refugee from Myanmar, visited the Baptist World Alliance Center in November.

May, who now lives in the US state of Nebraska, had addressed a World Council of Churches conference in Washington, DC prior to her visit to the BWA Center. She detailed the horrific experience of minority ethnic groups in her country, such as the Karen, the Kareni, the Chin and the Kachin.

May is a Karen, a people group that has, since 1949, fought for political independence for Karen state because “they have not been accepted as citizens in their own homeland.” Repression by the military government, in control of the country since the early 1960s, has been severe. “The villages are attacked, people are killed, raped, tortured, and people are forced to labor for no pay.”

As a result, there are approximately 200,000 refugees and displaced persons both inside and outside of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. Thousands live in the jungle, and an estimated 150,000 live in refugee camps.

Reporting that 50 percent of the Karen are Christians, most of them Baptists, May said that “many of these persecuted people are Christians, and they continue to be faithful.”

“There is no change in Burma,” May said. “The Karen and others still are not accepted there.” Several countries, including the United States, have begun to take in refugees. There are now an estimated 30,000 Myanmar refugees in the US alone, in more than 130 cities.

May is mobilizing Myanmar refugees, especially the women, who are scattered in many cities and states throughout the US.

The story of Htoo May and her people can be read in greater detail in the January issue of BWA Connect, the Baptist World Alliance monthly newsletter, available on the BWA website, www.bwanet.org.

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The Baptist World Alliance is a fellowship of 214 Baptist conventions and unions comprising a membership of more than 37 million baptized believers and a community of 105 million. The BWA unites Baptists worldwide, leads in world evangelism, responds to people in need, defends human rights and promotes theological reflection.

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A Year of Celebration: Baptists Mark 400 Years in 2009

2009 is a significant year for Baptists, and celebrations are planned to mark this 400th anniversary of the historic Baptist movement. A range of events – both local and international – are planned by Baptist churches and organizations.

Living Water Conferences in South Asia

This past November hundreds attended Living Water Conferences in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal, experiencing unity as they focused on evangelism and servant leadership.

Ruth Watson, BWA UN Representative

The BWA thanks Ruth Watson for her years of valuable service to the worldwide Baptist family, as she informed UN delegates and ambassadors about the work of Baptists, and acted as an advocate for those whose human rights and religious liberty were threatened.

Anti-Christian Violence Spreads in India

A wave of anti-Christian violence began in Orissa and spread to other Indian states, resulting in more than 60 deaths and another 50,000 left homeless. Baptist leaders call for action.

Serving Cheerfully in Poland

Baptists in Poland celebrate 150 years of perseverance and faithful Baptist ministry.

Book Note

Joseph Early, Jr., Readings in Baptist History: Four Centuries of Selected Documents, B&H Publishing Group, 2008

In Memoriam

In Memoriam
Challenges, Models and Virtues

The books Baptists write: how they inspire us! Late last year, I found three of these especially helpful. The first is addressed to an audience of post-moderns who feel that the church has perhaps served its time and that they should move on to other endeavors. The book is written by one who has been down that road, but who found reason to reject the temptation to push the church to the periphery of life. After this experience, Alan Jamieson communicates his ideas not with triumphalism, but with thoughtful, invitational language worthy of an intelligent Baptist. He calls the book, *Chrysalis: The Hidden Transformation in the Journey of Faith* (Paternoster, 2007).

Tracing the life cycle of a butterfly, Jamieson images the Christian life with its ebb and flow and offers advice and encouragement for weary travelers on the Christian road. Baptists in New Zealand should be proud of a thoughtful contribution to a dialogue that needs the input of people like the theological and sociological writer Jamieson is.

The second book is of a different sort. It holds up before us a man who is, in many ways, a model for serious Christians. Timothy George and Eric Mason are the editors of *Theology in the Service of the Church: Essays Presented to Fisher H. Humphreys* (Mercer, 2008). After a particularly impressive preface by Thomas Corts and the sort of introduction one would expect of someone of Timothy George’s brilliance, 14 thoughtful essays follow. What strikes me is the clear impression the reader derives from the text of Humphreys as a person who combines rigorous scholarship with compelling godliness. Each chapter addresses an issue related in one way or another to Humphreys’ life and work. These essays reflect a wide range of disciplines and the authors include Curtis Freeman, Steve Harmon, Wanda Lee and Richard Land.

I wish Bill Leonard’s excellent defense of the need for the study of Church History gave a clearer impression that the Orthodox Church – both Eastern and Oriental – is a part of the Christian community. I was particularly intrigued by Gary Furr’s essay on theology, worship and the arts. Certainly, through the literary offerings it makes available to the public, Beeson Seminary continues to be a shining light in the constellation of Baptist theological schools.

The final of the trilogy I mention is a marvelous little book dealing with Christian spirituality. It reminds us that it is possible to communicate in such a way that everyone has a good chance of understanding what we are saying. Daniel Vestal has done the Christian community a great service in producing *Being the Presence of Christ: A Vision for Transformation* (Upper Room Books, 2008). His gentle and charitable spirit evinces calm and his book – true to his nature – will inspire all who will go through its 135 pages.

In a world where many are searching for meaning, purpose and focus for their lives, Vestal offers advice that rings with a certitude drawn, not only from intellectual analysis, but from the existential quest for holiness. One senses that the author is digging deep from the wells of experience and offering up precious insights that can aid any Christian who wants to go forward faithfully on life’s pilgrimage.

The three books I read late last year – and I did also read several others – remind me of the priceless value of reading. Especially in these days, we do well to encourage young and old to spend time reading books that uplift the spirit by communicating to us positive perspectives on challenges we should not overlook, models we should emulate and virtues we should cultivate.

May this new year be a time when the urgent concerns we just mentioned become a regular part of your life’s agenda.

FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY
Neville Callam
Baptist Churches in Vietnam (BCV), one of several Baptist conventions and unions in the Southeast Asian country, gained official recognition from the Vietnamese government in early October.

BCV, formed in 1989, is now allowed, by decree issued by the Government Religious Section, “to live according to the gospel, serving the Lord, serving the Nation, having close relationship with the national people and complying with the national law.”

BCV, which has its headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam’s largest city, has more than 18,400 members in more than 400 house churches in 42 provinces and cities. It is one of five known Baptist groups in the country of 86 million people. Most of these Baptist groups are yet to receive official government recognition.

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) sponsored a human rights visit to Vietnam in May 2006, and brought the five groups together for the first time. Some of the Baptist conventions and unions in Vietnam were unaware of the existence of other Baptist groups in the country.

The BWA delegation, which included BWA President David Coffey, met with Nguyen Thanh Xuan, Vice Chairman of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, Nguyen Thanh Tai, Vice Chairman of the Ho Chi Minh City People’s Committee, as well as other government leaders, and discussed the implementation of policies related to religious freedom, as enshrined in the Vietnamese constitution.

Coffey pressed the government leaders for a normalization of religious freedom, including the right to open church buildings, Bible schools and compassionate ministries.

The Christian population in Vietnam is estimated at eight percent, and has suffered persecution under communist rulers, which placed severe restrictions on most religious activities. Protestant Christianity, including Baptists, has grown rapidly in the country in recent times, mostly through the house church movement.

The government decree granting official recognition, issued on October 3, declared that all government entities, including “chairmen of the People Committees in the provinces (and) cities that are directly dependent to the Central Government,” as well as “heads of the Government Religious units, are responsible to execute this decision.” The official permission certificate was received during a ceremony on October 13, in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam.

“We rejoice with you in the religious freedom you have recently been granted and pray for God’s blessing and provision to continue to be experienced among you,” the BWA wrote to Thong Nguyen, president of BCV. “We are thankful for your presence in the global Baptist movement.”

Thong Nguyen informed the BWA that a special celebration will be held April 22-24, 2009, to “mark the development of the Lord’s work in Vietnam.”
The Youth Department of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), in conjunction with the All Africa Baptist Youth Fellowship (AABYF), held a conference on “Peace and Conflict Resolution in Africa – The Christian Perspective” in Tema, Ghana, from October 6-10.

The 27 young Baptist leaders in attendance came from countries in the West African sub-region – Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Sierra Leone and Cameroon. Drawing on their personal experiences growing up in a region beleaguered by war and civil strife, the conference participants talked about peace-building efforts in which youth can engage.

Young people have a unique perspective in desiring a peaceful future for the region. They were often the primary victims of the conflicts in these countries, in some cases even being conscripted to serve as child soldiers, such as in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The conference delegates discussed, in the context of Christian principles, how young people can work to resolve conflicts without resorting to war.

Emmett Dunn, director of the BWA Youth Department, the leadership of the Ghana Baptist Convention, and representatives from the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, based in Accra, Ghana, all participated in the meeting.

The delegates made nine recommendations as a result of the deliberations. These include the development of a curriculum for peace and justice to be used by all seminaries in Africa and the creation of literacy programs in churches, based on the assertion that “illiteracy is one of the fundamental causes of our problems.” Delegates also resolved that the AABYF would “encourage member bodies to organize electoral monitoring and peace advocacy units to monitor elections in Africa and the world at large.”

The recommendations will set the agenda for a continent-wide BWA/AABYF peace conference in Sierra Leone in November of 2009.
Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance, has provided US$30,000 for relief in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The grant is offered in the wake of recent fighting between government and rebel forces in the mineral rich country that has displaced an estimated 250,000 persons. Millions were already displaced in the DRC and bordering countries such as Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda as a result of the Second Congo War waged between 1998 and 2003, as well as other flare-ups since the official end of that war. The Second Congo War resulted in the deaths of an estimated four million people.

The latest fighting began in late October in the province of North Kivu in eastern DRC when a rebel group, the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), engaged the Congolese army and Mai-Mai pro-government militias and captured territories close to Goma, capital of North Kivu.

Baptists have been affected by the conflict. Robert Bruce Paden of the Evangelical Community of Baptist Churches of Eastern Congo (CEBCE) reported that “the Baptist church community has been devastated by the war that has been raging in eastern Congo.” He estimates that “eighty percent of the pastors and people in our churches have fled because of the fighting in their areas, and thus many CEBCE churches are no longer functioning for this reason.”

Athanase Habimana, president of the Union of Baptist Churches of DRC (UEBC) informed the BWA that “there are 17 brothers arrested” by the Coalition of Congolese Patriotic Resistance, an opposition group, the CNDP, “and the regular army saying this one or that one collaborates with this or that group.”

CNDP, the rebel group, and Mai-Mai pro-government militias have been accused of raping young girls and women and forcing children to join their forces. Habimana said that “many children are now soldiers in rebel factions,” including the child of a Baptist pastor, and that parents who refuse to hand over their children are killed. Government forces are also accused of rapes and looting.

The BWAid grant will be shared equally between three groups – CEBCE, UEBC, and the Baptist Community in Central Africa. The money will be used to provide food, water, and shelter for displaced persons.

Forrestal Lawton, president of the Baptist World Alliance Men’s Department, was a special guest at the 74th Annual Session of the Jamaica Baptist Union Brotherhood (JBUB) held November 14-16.

The conference, held at the Baptist Conference Centre in Trelawny on the country’s north coast, had as its theme, “Men Living in the Spirit.”

In his address, Lawton told the men that, among the several callings they should consider, is that of being missionaries in other countries, reminding them that “those who God calls, he also equips for the ministry.”

Lawton stated that he was “impressed by the work being done by the Jamaica Baptist Men” as “they are involved in many projects across Jamaica.” He further noted that the men of Jamaica had “pledged their support of the Caribbean Baptist Men’s Fellowship and the BWA Men’s Department.”

Among activities held during the conference were a training session, an open air evangelism service, and a business meeting. The conference concluded with church services on Sunday at St. Ann’s Bay Baptist Church.

Approximately 200 Baptist men from several Jamaican cities and towns, including Kingston, Montego Bay, Ocho Rios, and St. Ann’s Bay, attended.

Lawton plans to return to Jamaica in 2009 when the JBUB will hold its 75th conference.
An estimated 3,000 worshippers gathered in Mbanza-Kongo in the southern African country of Angola in September to celebrate 130 years of Baptist witness in the country.

The celebration, which began on September 25 and ended on the 28th, saw the participation of 33 choirs, including 27 from Angola’s capital, Luanda, and two from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which borders Angola to the north.

Among the events held were an early Saturday morning baptism in a local river, the ordination of new pastors, and a celebration of Holy Communion with 2,000 participants. All-night festivals were held on Friday and Saturday.

The Sunday morning worship service was followed by a banquet hosted by the governor of the province of Zaire, of which Mbanza-Kongo is the capital. One hundred pastors attended the banquet.

Keynote speaker was João Matwawana, who, along with his wife Nora, received the 2007 BWA Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award. The Matwawanias, both Angolan missionaries now living in Canada, have played a pivotal role in reconciliation and peace efforts in Burundi, Rwanda, the DRC, and in Angola since the 1970s.

The Matwawanas used the occasion to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in the very same place they got married in September 1958.

Baptist witness began in Angola in 1878 with the arrival of British missionaries George Grenfell and Thomas J. Comber in the then Kingdom of Kongo. There are three Baptist conventions and unions in Angola that are member bodies of the BWA, with a total of approximately 140,000 baptized believers in more than 600 churches.

The Baptist Women’s Union of Latin America (Unión Femenil Bautista America Latina-UFBAL) held its Continental Union Congress in Guayaquil, Ecuador, from October 1-4, 2008.

Six hundred women representing all of the Latin American countries attended the congress, which marked the 55th anniversary of the founding of UFBAL. Twenty out of the 23 National Women’s organizations were represented.

The five year emphasis, “Breaking Down Barriers,” continued into the congress with the theme, “Committed to Extend the Kingdom of God,” which was developed through Bible studies, special presentations, and workshops.

Dorothy Selebano, president of the BWA Women’s Department, brought compelling messages about being committed to extend the Kingdom of God.

New officers were elected to lead the women’s organization, which encompasses women’s groups in Central and South America. Marlene Baltazar da Nobrega Gomez of Brazil was elected president, while Ynés de Palacios of Peru was elected secretary.
The newest member body of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), the Community of Christian Churches in Africa (CECA), has experienced significant growth over a 12 month period.

Thirty four new churches were planted in Rwanda, increasing the total number of Rwandan churches in CECA from 115 in July 2007 to 149 in July 2008. There was an increase of 13,000 CECA members in Rwanda over the period, moving from 30,015 to 43,700 members.

CECA was received as a BWA member body in July 2007 during the BWA General Council meeting in Accra, Ghana, and includes churches in Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The reports of significant growth in Rwanda were made at a meeting of CECA’s Executive Board of Directors held in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, in July. The meeting did not report on growth in the other countries, but noted that there are 63 CECA churches in eastern DRC, 17 churches in Uganda, and four in Burundi.

CECA, which has its headquarters in Kigali, has approximately 3,000 students enrolled in five high schools, two primary schools and 28 kindergarten schools in Rwanda. It also operates a Bible school as well as 54 basic literacy centers in local churches in the country, which was devastated by genocide in 1994 in which approximately 800,000 Rwandans died. Roughly 55 percent of CECA’s students were orphaned by war and HIV/AIDS.

The church body has 24 women’s and youth groups working in an HIV/AIDS program in five provinces in Rwanda. Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the BWA, gave US$15,000 in emergency assistance to CECA in July. The funds were used to construct roofs for six classrooms for the Christian College of Muvumba, one of the five CECA high schools in Rwanda, that enabled the school to meet government deadlines and regulations.

CECA began in Rwanda in 1989 and received official recognition from the Rwanda government in 1992. Presiding Bishop, Senior Pastor, and General Secretary, Enoch B. Dusingizimana, is a member of the General Council of the BWA.

My name is Evelina Dubceac from the Eastern European country of Moldova. Because of the BWA Women’s Department, I had an opportunity to participate in such a special event as the Baptist Youth World Conference that happens once every five years. The conference was an amazing experience, uniting young people from 89 countries, worshiping the same Almighty God.

The theme of the conference was “Dive Deeper,” which challenged us to think about our deeper relationship with Christ, and also how we can “Dive Deeper” in mission.

Throughout the five days of teaching by Nick Lear, we learned how to have a deeper faith in Jesus, deeper justice from Jesus, deeper listening to Jesus, deeper outreach for Jesus and deeper experience of Jesus. Nick urged everyone to examine our lives to see if we are living for greed or if we are seeking a life filled with justice in the name of Jesus.

After the lessons we would discuss the theme of the Bible Study in small family groups to see how we could apply it to our life, or what we need to change to reach the point Jesus wants us to be. The family group became a real family for these five days, including people from different countries. Then we had lunch together so we could fellowship more. Family groups were organized to make friends with young people around the world.

The major part that impressed me was Praise and Worship time. It was just so encouraging! An amazing experience you will never get in daily life. I enjoyed worshiping God with people from different cultures.

The program was so full with a lot of different and interesting activities. We even had a “chill out” area with lots of interesting activities where you could relax, visit with others, and get to know them better. That was so special!

This experience I will never forget. It enriched my spiritual life and my relationship with God became stronger. The conference inspired me to get involved with missions in my country and internationally. I’m sure all attendees already started to DIVE DEEPER in their relationship with God!

Evelina Dubceac
Moldova

Right: Christian College of Muvumba, one of five CECA high schools, which received emergency assistance from BWAid for roof construction
Nikolay Sinkovets, President of the Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists of Belarus (UECBB), visited the Baptist World Alliance Center in Falls Church, Virginia, on Tuesday, December 9.

Sinkovets, who was on a trip to visit with fellow Belarusian Baptists in the United States, met with BWA General Secretary Neville Callam, who welcomed the Baptist leader and his wife, Lyuba.

“I’m thankful that we have the opportunity to visit the Baptist World Alliance and to meet the leaders of the BWA,” Sinkovets said.

The Belarus leader informed the BWA of the work being done by Baptists in his country, including ministry to young families through seminars, summer camps and conferences for youth and children, and a heavy emphasis on Bible study in churches. 2008 was declared as “youth year”, with the intention to prepare youth for leadership within the Baptist church.

Sinkovets invited Callam to make a visit to his country in the near future.

The first Baptist church was planted in Belarus in 1902. UECBB became an autonomous Baptist union after Belarus gained its independence following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991.

There are 292 Baptist churches and more than 13,000 baptized believers in the country of almost 10 million people.

Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam has sent a letter of comfort to Baptists in India in the wake of the attacks in Mumbai, the country’s financial capital and largest city, in late November.

“I was in your capital city of Delhi on the night of November 26, 2008, when terrorists commenced their savage and senseless assault against your historic city of Mumbai,” the letter read. “I am deeply saddened by the loss sustained by both my Indian brothers and sisters and the foreign nationals who have been innocently killed or wounded in what was a vicious coordinated attack on Mumbai.”

The BWA leader expressed regret and support on the behalf of Baptists everywhere. “On behalf of the worldwide Baptist family, I write to express our solidarity with you in this sad time of loss. We join you in prayer for those who mourn the loss of life in their families and communities.”

He urged Baptists to “join hands with all fellow Christians” and “to do whatever we can to thwart the growth of the cancer of terrorism and to bring peace and healing to our world.”
United States

BWA Congratulates Billy Graham

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) congratulated evangelist Billy Graham on his 90th birthday, which he celebrated on Friday, November 7.

Graham has had a long association with the BWA, having spoken at every Baptist World Congress between 1950 and 1985. The World Congress is the largest international gathering of Baptists, held every five years, and is planned and sponsored by the BWA. At the 10th World Congress in 1960 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, an estimated 200,000 persons gathered to hear Graham preach.

Graham has continued to give moral support to the international organization, which comprises 214 member bodies with more than 37 million baptized believers in more than 100 countries. “I enthusiastically endorse the BWA and pledge my support,” Graham wrote. “I know of few organizations across the world which minister as effectively as the Baptist World Alliance. At times, in fact, it has been the only channel through which assistance could be given to churches in hostile countries.”

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam hailed the internationally renowned evangelist as “an outstanding man of God who is a true ambassador of the church of Jesus Christ.” Graham, he says, “is worthy of emulation in his integrity, humility, and commitment to the Gospel of Christ.” The BWA leader wished for Graham an enjoyable birthday, the peace of God, and the presence of loving family and friends through the rest of his days.

Billy Graham, center, with former BWA President Noel Vose, left, and former BWA General Secretary Gerhard Claas, in the 1980s

India

A General Secretary Comforts Baptists

More than 170 persons were killed and almost 300 injured between November 26 and 29 in Mumbai when 10 gunmen staged several attacks in the city, including at hotels, restaurants, hospitals and a Jewish synagogue.

Callam was on a visit to India, Bangladesh, and Nepal during the month of November.

Indian firemen look for victims in the debris of a collapsed building in Mumbai November 12, 2008. At least four people were confirmed killed when the six-story building collapsed near a market in south Mumbai.

REUTERS/Arko Datta
is not easy to define as there are several conflicting models of church unity, such as organizational or administrative unity, koinonia, and unity in diversity, among other models.

Unity among Baptists, or the lack thereof, is conditioned by several factors. Schisms among Baptists often occur over theological matters – differences in interpretation or application of scripture, or differing doctrinal positions on issues such as the ordained ministry and the Holy Communion; or administrative issues such as leadership and property disputes.

The question remains, Why are there different Baptist groups in the first place? Why, for instance, in countries such as India or Cameroon or Cuba or Indonesia, do we have different Baptist groups in the same country?

The answer to some of these questions is straightforward, while some answers are far more complex. History, culture, language, race and ethnicity play a major role in the creation of various Baptist groups within the same national boundaries.

**Causes of Disunity**

Historically, mission societies and agencies from Europe, North America and Asia rarely cooperated or coordinated mission activities. For instance, missionaries
from the Baptist Missionary Society in England (now BMS World Mission) sent missionaries to Orissa state in eastern India, while American Baptist Churches USA did mission work among the Telugus in some southern Indian states such as Andhra Pradesh. These missionary activities created different Baptist groups that sometimes had little contact with each other, or, at least in the early years, may have been totally unaware of each other. Similar occurrences can be cited for Zimbabwe, Cameroon, and the Philippines, among other countries.

The history of the enslavement of Africans by Europeans and colonialists in the Americas, such as in the United States, led to the creation of predominantly black church organizations, including black Baptist churches, which are distinct not only in racial makeup, but also in ethos and worship style from other church organizations that consist predominantly of white Americans.

Culturally, the Telugus of Andhra Pradesh are different from the Nagas in Northeast India, the latter more culturally and ethnically aligned to East Asians such as the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans. Differences in culture, ethnicity and language hold for Thailand, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Finland, and others, where two or more Baptist groups exist.

Churches’ response to government policy or practice causes divisions and conflicts. This was common in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe during the time of communism, a legacy that still prevails in some former Soviet republics in Central Asia such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Schisms occur over whether churches should comply with, or resist, government policies having to do with official registration and other requirements.

For centuries, among the sources of divisions among Baptists are those who hold to Calvinist theology and those who are Arminian in belief. The former holds to a doctrine of predestination which the latter opposes, believing that human free will is compatible with God’s sovereignty. This old conflict has again reared its head among Baptists.

Another old conflict that has reappeared is differences in the approach to, and interpretation of, scripture, with some Baptists holding to a literalist reading and interpretation of scripture, while others, though claiming a high view of scripture, contend that at least some portions of scripture are best interpreted metaphorically.

In the United States, and increasingly in other countries, moral and social issues are becoming sources of conflict, with attached labels such as conservative and liberal apportioned by, or to, each other. The labels of conservative and liberal relate to an approach to biblical hermeneutics or interpretation, resulting in the different ways in which moral conclusions are drawn. These moral and social issues often refer to, but are not restricted to, marriage, sexuality, and life issues such as euthanasia, and especially abortion.

**What Unites**

Notwithstanding the many causes of disunity, most Baptists hold to core principles that unite. These include a resolute commitment to mission and evangelism. Baptists take Jesus’ words, “Go and make disciples of all nations,” as a mandate to ensure that all peoples in all parts of the world hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In speaking of the unifying effect of mission, David Goatley wrote elsewhere in this publication, “When we engage missionally, we seem to make progress toward community.”

Baptists are also resolutely committed to religious liberty. George Truett, writing in 1920, said, “Baptists, more than any other people in the world, have forever been the protagonists of religious liberty, and its compatriot, civil liberty.”

A commitment to religious liberty stems from the doctrinal position of soul liberty or the priesthood of all believers, as well as the notion of the autonomy of the local church. Such positions renounce government or other interference in church affairs, the support by government of any religion, and the passing of official judgment on individual conscience. Baptists, in fact, not only resist interference from outside forces, but are generally opposed to any attempts by any denominational church body – local, national, regional, or international – to seek to impose its will on congregations.

A strong desire for, and the practice of, fellowship unites Baptists. Individual congregations join to form associations, associations form conventions and unions, and conventions and unions come together through a worldwide movement of Baptist fellowship through the Baptist World Alliance. Baptists value the principle of associationalism where fraternal relationships are established to address common concerns among Baptists.

The Baptist World Alliance has been, for more than a century, the main symbol of unity among Baptists. Formed in 1905, the BWA has done the remarkable by bringing various groups of Baptists together.

This is due to the nature of the BWA from its inception. BWA President John Clifford, speaking at the 1911 Baptist World Congress in Philadelphia in the United States,
said, “The complete autonomy of the separate church is a creation of grace, and will not suffer. Each society will insist on maintaining its independence.”

The BWA does not, and was never intended to, interfere in the affairs of local and national church bodies, except as a presence and symbol of peace and unity in matters of conflict and dispute. The international body has been called upon, and has stepped in, to heal unresolved tensions and to bring about reconciliation between Baptist groups in various countries, such as in Cuba, India, Zambia, and Brazil. The world organization contributed to the process to resolve conflicts between Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda, Kukis and Nagas in India, and between blacks and whites in South Africa.

Despite its voluntary, loose fraternal gathering, the BWA has grown stronger, with the growing Baptist awareness of the need to balance soul freedom and mutual accountability.

The BWA, for much of its history, has emphasized mission and evangelism, mainly through conferences and training, such as the Living Water conferences being held around the world; has focused much on advocacy for human rights, in particular religious freedom; and has done much in relief, aid, and community development through Baptist World Aid. These projects, programs, and events have enabled Baptists to share common concerns and to cooperate on a global level.

The BWA has deliberately fostered fellowship and has enabled Baptists to be in touch with each other in a way that they could not have been otherwise.

Unity and freedom are essential to Baptist life.

History

Baptists in South Africa were divided in the past on racial, language, and doctrinal grounds.

The racial divide began in colonial times when Dutch, English and German settlers from Europe came to the Southern tip of Africa in search of a better life and met the African tribes that had previously migrated south.

English Baptists settled in the Eastern Cape and the first small Baptist group was started in Salem in 1819. Later the “Mother Church” was constituted in Grahamstown.

Settler clashes with the Xhosa nation started in 1834 which marked the beginning of the conflict between black and white South Africans that was to last for 160 years into the Apartheid years, until the first fully democratic elections in which all South Africans participated in 1994.

Baptists were involved in mission to the Xhosa nation in the early days of the European settlement, and later to all the indigenous groups that called South Africa their home.

Some early church services were integrated racially, but language and cultural differences were hard to overcome and to this day language and culture keep Baptists from worshipping together on Sundays, especially in rural areas and small towns.

In the past decade it has been heartening to see Baptists of all races worshipping together in some city churches, in annual gatherings of assemblies and convention meetings, as well as training seminars.

The doctrinal divisions have centered on the Calvinist or Arminian emphases in theology. The first such division occurred in 1857 in Grahamstown when the “Mother Church” divided into two separate congregations over the issue. It took 15 years for the two churches to reunite.

Today within the member churches of the Baptist bodies in South Africa, some individual churches are Reformed (Calvinistic) in doctrine, yet maintain membership with the Baptist body. There are also some member churches that have a Charismatic emphasis and also remain member churches. In my opinion, this is a very healthy situation resulting in the exercise of tolerance and respect for different theological interpretations of the Scriptures while holding Baptist principles dear and maintaining a high view of the authority of Scripture.

Conflict

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa was made up of several associations. These were territorial and special associations formed on the basis of cultural, ethnic, and language differences.

Looking back, it is clear that racial attitudes and issues also played a major role in these divisions. These racial attitudes resulted in a major split in the 1980s when three of the four associations withdrew from the Baptist Union.
of Southern Africa and became separate Baptist bodies, namely, the Baptist Convention of South Africa; the Baptist Association of South Africa, and the Baptist Mission of South Africa. The fourth group was formed on the basis of a separate language (Afrikaans).

Much suffering resulted because of the division as disputes over property and pensions saw Baptists fighting and turning their backs on each other.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation efforts took place over eight years. Some of these efforts were facilitated by the Baptist World Alliance. Other partners such as the Southern Baptist Convention and American Baptist Churches USA were helpful in remaining neutral while helping to fund and facilitate our meeting together.

After much infighting and heartache; after honest speaking and listening; after years of turmoil and after the Divine intervention of the Holy Spirit, the “South African Baptist Alliance” was launched in 2001. (See my article in “Baptist Faith and Witness” Book 3, page 16, “Reconciliation between Baptists in South Africa.”)

For three years, regular quarterly meetings of the leaders and representatives of the five Baptist bodies were convened, as well as cooperation in evangelism, exchange of lecturers at theological training colleges, and cooperation in mission sending.

Since 2002, leadership of all the Baptist groups changed and priorities changed.

One disappointment was a failed attempt to get the ministerial students from each group to study together.

Nevertheless attitudes and cooperation between the groups continues in a spirit of trust and fellowship

Cooperation and Unity

Four of the groups are now member bodies of the BWA and meet together with great joy at all BWA gatherings.

Today all South African Baptist Alliance members are also involved in the All Africa Baptist Fellowship (AABF) Southern Region activities.

Paul Msiza, General Secretary of the Baptist convention, and Angelo Scheepers, General Secretary of the union, serve

(Continued on next page)
had criticized and spoken evil of his fellow Baptist. He asked for forgiveness. The two men met each other in the aisle and embraced. This started a floodgate of confession and repentance with scores of people from both sides standing to confess and asking for forgiveness. There was much weeping; there were little prayer groups all over the hall; there were black and white delegates hugging each other repenting for behavior and attitudes of the past.

This went on for five hours without stopping.

Finally, exhausted, we took a brief break. During this time the Communion Table was prepared. When we returned to the hall we sat at the Lord’s Table together for the first time since 1987. It was an emotional and deeply spiritual event. The General Secretary of the BU served the bread to the BC delegates, and the General Secretary of the BC served the bread to the BU delegates as we remembered the death of Jesus Christ for us. The facilitator then asked us to take two Communion cups and to go to someone in the hall who had been the object of their pain and bitterness and to use the moment to reconcile, sharing the cup together, remembering that Jesus shed His blood for our sins.

At the close of an exhausting day, we all sat in silence for a while. Then one of the BC delegates, a Xhosa woman from the Transkei, got up and went to the wall. She removed one of the pages containing the script of our grievances and came and placed it under the Communion Table. Then another and another got up and removed the papers from the wall, until they were all placed under the Communion Table. Another woman got on her hands and knees under the table and packed the papers into a neat pile.

The BU and the BC leaders rose and declared that we would not resurrect the issues that were under the table again. They were covered by the blood of Jesus.

To this day the issues that caused us such pain have not arisen again to damage the continued process of our reconciliation towards unity. Other issues have arisen that still need time and concerted commitment to resolve.

We resolved to work towards unity. 

Terry Rae, former General Secretary for the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, is a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance, and is a member of the General Council and Executive Committee.

Former BWA President Billy Kim speaking at a unity and evangelism meeting in Durban, South Africa, in 2001

Challenges

We are urged to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” Ephesians 4:3. Keeping unity between us needs constant attention by leaders and members in the church. Division diverts the focus of the church away from evangelism and mission; saps all our spiritual energy and gets us looking at each other instead of focusing upon Christ and the lost and needy of this world; and causes heartache and grief and robs us of our peace in Christ. Division is sin and kills our joy in service.

For years, evangelism, church planting and mission were placed on the backburner in South Africa. Now, since settling our differences, a new surge of outreach and mission has resulted among Baptists in South Africa.

Spiritual unity does not necessarily mean organizational unity, but what a wonderful challenge faces South African Baptist leaders in the future! That is to bring the different bodies now cooperating so well into ONE Baptist body in South Africa. A challenge few Baptist bodies have achieved anywhere in the world.

“There is one body and one Spirit” Ephesians 4:4.
In January 1932, during the national assembly of the Baptist convention in Chile, the people met in a large church in the south of Chile, and had a strong discussion about the way money should be handled. They were not able to make peace about it, and a group of about five pastors left the convention. This caused much distress, to the point that the church where the meeting was held was closed for several years.

For 70 years the two groups grew separately. The larger group, the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile (UEBCC), worked for many years with missionaries from the Southern Baptist Convention in the USA, and had churches, seminaries and schools that helped the union to grow. The Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission (CBCCM) grew as well, but not as much as the other, because it had fewer resources.

During those years, on some occasions, the two groups exchanged seminary professors and some of the pastors of the CBCCM came to study at UEBCC’s seminary.

During a meeting of the Union of Baptists in Latin America (UBLA), I, the president of UEBCC, met Mario Ramos, president of the CBCCM, in Cochabamba, Bolivia. We thought that it was wrong that, coming from the same country, and even from the same city, we would be meeting for the first time in another country, considering that we share the same roots, the same Statement of Faith and the same last name, “Bautista.”

We also realized that, even though the two groups were separated historically, we have many things in common, things that are in the “Baptist DNA.” We have the same difficulties and same dreams.

We started conversations about having an official encounter between the two groups, and we realized that this would bring many blessings to all of us.

For this reason, the UEBCC invited the Executive Board of the CBCCM to be present at a meeting of our convention. On this occasion, we had a reconciliation and forgiveness service. Alberto Prokopchuk, UBLA General Secretary, witnessed the reconciliation on the behalf of the BWA and UBLA.

A few weeks later, we repeated the same ceremony in the CBCCM assembly. This was also done with a lot of emotion. We declared on that occasion that we recognized that we let so much time pass before asking for forgiveness for what our parents had done, even though they believed they were doing the right thing.

We believe that this was an historic moment for the Baptist work in Chile. The two groups not only share the same doctrines and principles, hymnology, and liturgy, but also the same common roots. This year we celebrated the 100th anniversary of organized Baptist work in Chile. To have reconciled before our centennial helped us to celebrate our unity in Christ.

Three years have passed since the historic reconciliation services. We did not become structurally one body again, but we do many things together now. A year ago we had a large Women’s Congress organized jointly by the two groups. The president of the CBCCM seminary married a pastor of the UEBCC. In early December, I attended a pastors’ meeting in the south of Chile and pastors from both conventions in that city were present. This is not strange anymore. All over the country the churches do different activities together.

We believe that God has called us to live in unity. This unity is based in the love of our Lord through his Son Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit that is in us. Unity has become a blessing so important for us and we no longer feel that we are separated.

Raquel Contreras is president of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile, president of the Union of Baptists in Latin America, a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance, and a member of the BWA General Council and Executive Committee.

Alberto Prokopchuk, BWA Regional Secretary for Latin America, center, leads in prayer while holding the hands of Raquel Contreras, president of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile, and Mario Ramos, president of the Baptist Chilean Mission, at a service of reconciliation between the two Baptist groups.

Photo by Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile
Divided by civil war for more than 25 years, in April 2008 the Sudan Interior Church (SIC), a member body of the Baptist World Alliance, culminated a year-long process with a full reconciliation that merged two denominational administrative structures – SIC-North and SIC-South – into one unified leadership.

Centered in a hotly contested area of Sudanese oilfields along the north-south rift, when war erupted in 1983, members of the SIC scattered to refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya and to areas of displacement throughout Sudan, particularly in the north. As a pragmatic attempt to minister to a church divided by war, the SIC formed administrative centers in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, and in Nairobi, Kenya. Though divided, for the next two decades SIC Christians worked to maintain a dynamic ministry amidst situations of war, displacement, and extreme poverty.

Among the Uduk of the Blue Nile, for example, lay evangelists witnessed the rapid expansion of Christianity from a small minority to approximately 80 percent of the ethnic group. Throughout the 1980s many Uduk congregated at Tsore Refugee Camp in Ethiopia where they functioned as a repository of hope that led the way in building 17 churches and in providing key social leadership to the refugee community.

The SIC also produced one of the most influential leaders of contemporary Sudan, Haruun Ruun. After serving as the first General Secretary of the SIC, Ruun was eventually appointed as the Executive Secretary of the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSSC). Under his leadership the NSSC transitioned into a powerful interlocutor of peace and justice that fostered reconciliation between warring southern ethnicities, held rebel leaders accountable for human rights infringements and built international advocacy links that were critical to the establishment of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Though the SIC experienced persecution and the targeted destruction of church property, the denomination grew to more than 225 churches and more than 40,000 baptized believers.

With BWA funding, in April 2007 the Executive Committees of SIC-North and SIC-South met for the first time and agreed to pursue a course of reconciliation. After a second meeting in November, the first SIC General Assembly in 25 years convened April 1-5, 2008, and constituted a united church and leadership. During this historic meeting, Ramadan Chan was elected General Secretary and John Elsir was elected Deputy General Secretary for a one-year transition term tasked to intentionally encourage unity among SIC congregations. Full elections will occur in April 2009.

Chan described the merger as one of “jubilation and praises to God for his goodness,” and asked for ongoing prayer that nothing will “compromise the Lord’s mandate of edifying his body.”

Seeking to expand congregational unity and holistic community development, the SIC established Sudan Interior Aid as a relief and rehabilitation organization that is currently addressing health and education in an area shattered by war attrition. The SIC has also mobilized itinerant bicycle evangelists, assisted in translating the Bible into the Dinka Padang and Mabaan languages, and has engaged the government of South Sudan in the development of democratic elections.

Following a war that left more than two million dead and more than four million displaced, the SIC faces an array of challenges related to the full implementation of peace ranging from ministry among the traumatized, the repatriation and rehabilitation of displaced families and ongoing efforts to contribute to good governance. In September 2007, for example, during an SIC congregational gathering, an individual armed with a discarded hand-grenade attacked the worship service, injuring the pastor and killing himself and six children and youth.

A second area of challenge centers on theological education and the administration of the Gideon Theological College (GTC). Named after a martyred Sudanese Baptist pastor, during the war government forces occupied the facilities and used the library as a prison and the compound as a staging ground for military operations. When government forces left in January 2008, the water tank had been riddled with bullets and much of the furnishings and fencing had been appropriated. Despite an abused and limited infrastructure, the GTC has resumed classes, implemented a women’s program and is pursuing several innovative and environmentally sustainable agricultural endeavors.
Reconciliation between
RUSSIAN & GEORGIAN
Baptists
By Eron Henry

When the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, leading to the creation of several countries, churches also split along national lines. The Baptist union in the old Soviet state was severed into several parts, leading to the creation of new conventions and unions. Among the newly independent groups was the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia (EBCG), which was accepted as a member body of the Baptist World Alliance in 1992.

Political tensions have existed since 1991 between Russia, the successor to the Soviet empire, and some of its former republics that have become independent nations. The tensions between Russia and Georgia are multifarious, but are partly centered over two disputed territories – South Ossetia and Abkhazia – that are part of Georgia. In August 2008, a brief war broke out between the two countries after hostilities escalated between Ossetian separatist rebels and Georgian armed forces, with Russia siding with the separatists who wanted to secede from Georgia.

Churches in the two countries were being pressured to take sides in the war. According to one Baptist source in Russia, “The head of a national state legal organization called for the evaluation of religious groups through the lens of national security.” This official described so-called “non-traditional religious communities” (non-Orthodox Christian and other religious groups) as “a state-threatening fifth column.”

But Baptists in both Russia and Georgia turned the war into an opportunity for reconciliation and the healing of old wounds.

At the council meeting of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) in Lisbon, Portugal, in September 2008, the Baptist World Alliance and the EBF facilitated discussions between Malkhaz Songulashvili, President of EBCG, and Vitaly Vlasenko, Director of External Relations for RUECB.

A follow-up meeting was held in Kiev, Ukraine, also a former Soviet Republic, on October 30. At this meeting were Songulashvili and Bishop Merab Gaprindashvili, General Secretary of the EBCG, and Yuri Sipko, President of RUECB, and Vlasenko.

Also at this meeting were Baptist leaders from several other countries that were former Soviet Republics, such as Belarus, Latvia, and Estonia.

In a formal declaration, the RUECB and EBCG condemned the war between Russia and Georgia as “pointless and brutal,” called on the Russian and Georgian authorities to seek peaceful resolution of the conflict, and stated that “the issues between our countries should not be solved by military means.”

In mourning the deaths of civilians and soldiers from both sides, the leaders urged “all the peoples of faith communities to facilitate the process of forgiveness and reconciliation between our peoples.”

Both the EBCG and RUECB pledged to sort out relations between the two bodies, visit each other in an attempt to promote friendship and understanding, and to engage in theological dialogue.

Caught in the midst of more than two decades of war, largely isolated from the broader Baptist family and consciousness, and still in need of ongoing prayers and partnerships, the SIC is continuing to grow and minister to a land burdened with the echoing ghosts of war. Gathering in bombed out sanctuaries, flimsy tin buildings and under the open sky, the Sudan Interior Church is carrying a message of hope renewed in the forges of unity.

Elijah Brown, from Texas in the United States, is a member of the BWA Commission on Freedom and Justice, the Academic and Theological Education Workgroup, and the Emerging Leaders Network. His doctoral dissertation for the University of Edinburg in Scotland was on the role of the church in stabilization and peace in Southern Sudan.

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The United States of America is filled with diversity, variety, and complexity. It is a country comprised of multiple communities that express both uniqueness and commonality in numerous ways. Actually, to use the word community in the US context invites all kinds of definitions, qualifications, and explanations. Still, some things seem to hold us together despite the rugged individuality that so many affirm and promote.

The experience of Baptists in the US reflects much of the broader social context. We have many different ways of expressing our Baptist ways. The historical and contemporary expressions of Baptist life in the US invite some to question whether there actually is unity among us. Most historians would agree that to define the common qualities among Baptists in general and Baptists in the US in particular is a formidable challenge. Nearly all who make the attempt move rather quickly to nuance and qualify their assertions.

Denton Lotz, former General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, frequently stressed the position that Baptists are at our best when we are doing mission. Quoting some earlier historians, he would remind hearers that when you want to see Baptists doing well, you should visit them in their mission contexts.

In the 20th century US context, it seems that often the best Baptists could do together was sharing an event of singing and preaching on occasion. This certainly was the norm when it came to multicultural attempts at collaboration. To fill a big room with black and white Baptists, to have big choirs singing together or separately, and to have big name preachers delivering messages combined to produce a success. With so much division, an effort at worship between “communities” was a victory.

While it is impossible to claim a normative view, many of us who seek to be effective leaders of Baptist communities in the 21st century are not satisfied with the victory of a multicultural (which now means African American, European American, Asian American and Latin American at least) worship experience. Perhaps because more of us go to work and go to school in increasingly multicultural contexts (although we still don’t live in multicultural neighborhoods with much success), being in a public worship space with various cultural communities is not that big of a deal anymore. I think that Baptists in the US have the potential to experience our greatest unity when we do missional projects together. When we engage missionally, we seem to make progress toward community.

In January 2008, Baptists in North America did something new. An estimated 15,000 Baptists gathered in Atlanta, Georgia, for the New Baptist Covenant Celebration. The point of the effort was for Baptists to remove the boundaries and barriers we choose to live and work behind to demonstrate our common commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and to explore places and ways of collaboration and partnership for the sake of the Gospel. The planning and preparing and producing of that event was a grand experiment in which the Holy Spirit was proven to be real. Left to our own devises, we could have run the train off the track 100 different ways. But God was gracious. The event was a meaningful experience. And new partnerships have begun.

Regional New Baptist Covenant events are planned for 2009 in Missouri (April 2-4), North Carolina (April 23-25), and Oklahoma (August 6-7). Other partnership examples include:

- Mercer University and California Baptist University developing a joint proposal in response to a National Institutes of Health request for proposals
- American Baptist Churches USA, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Progressive National Baptist Convention collaborated on housing reconstruction in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in response to Hurricane Katrina
- National Baptist Convention of America and Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention are in a seven year partnership for ongoing response to Hurricane Katrina that has been expended to the aftermath of Hurricane Ike in Texas

These few expressions of collaboration are encouraging for the diverse contexts of Baptist life in the United States. Perhaps most exciting is the cooperation between college and seminary students who have met each other and discovered passion for working together born out of their connecting through the New Baptist Covenant Celebration.
Baptist presence in Trinidad can be dated from 1816. The first Baptists were companies of black soldiers who had fought alongside the British during the American War of Independence. At the end of the War the defeated British forces had to find a homeland for their supporters who could no longer remain on American soil.

Six companies were settled in Trinidad and out of this settlement emerged the Baptist community. They had embraced the Baptist faith while in slavery in America. Through their own efforts and with the support of missionaries from the Baptist Missionary Society in London and later that of the Southern Baptist Convention in the USA, Baptist work in Trinidad prospered. More than 100 churches were established in both the north and south of the island.

During the 1940s and 50s divisions arose as a result of differences of opinion over modes of worship, attitudes of foreign missionaries, and minor doctrinal issues. Factions broke away and formed individual associations, conventions and unions, such as the Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago (BUTT), the Independent Baptist Missionary Union (IBMU), and the Independent International Baptist Churches (IIBC). Sometime later the northern group of BUTT churches formed the Trinidad and Tobago Baptist Association (TTBA).

The Trinidad Baptist Mission (TBM) was formed as an independent body by American Baptist missionaries. Changes in the immigration laws have led to the dissolution of the TBM. This group was involved in the training of pastors and church workers and has made a tremendous contribution to the ministry of every church. These churches are now part of the TTBA.

In the mid 1980s, a positive move toward unification of the various groups resulted in the formation of the Trinidad and Tobago Baptist Fellowship (TTBF). This umbrella body has greatly facilitated cooperation to the mutual benefit of all bodies in leadership training, Christian education, evangelism and other areas of ministry.

Among the highlights of the movement are an annual rally, an annual dinner for pastors and their spouses, annual retreats for training in music, stewardship, Sunday School and Vacation Bible School.

In 2003, the Constitution of the TTBF was revised and the name of the organization was changed to United Baptists of Trinidad and Tobago (UBTT). It was also at this time that the United Baptist Theological Institute (UBTI) was formed to bring all the various leadership training programs and groups into one unit. Since its inception, 50 students have graduated with either a Certificate or Diploma in Biblical Studies. There are 39 students now in training.

For the time being, the program is decentralized, being housed at five different venues. However, Nelton Richardson, President of IIBC, has generously donated 20 acres of land to house the proposed United Baptist Theological Seminary. Through his efforts, the campus is being developed and the main building is near completion. We look forward to the day when it will be fully functional.

The UBTT has also established the United Baptist Credit Union. This is a voluntary self-help financial institution to cater exclusively to the needs of Baptists. The United Baptist Choir, which was given birth by Rev. and Mrs. Donald Snell and augmented by Rev. and Mrs. Harold Hostetler, continues to fulfill its ministry of conducting free public concerts focusing on evangelism.

While much has been done to foster unity among the different groups, the goal of a fully integrated organization, administered by a central executive and representing all evangelical Baptists in Trinidad and Tobago, remains elusive. Each group continues to operate independently with its own executive and its own agenda. The hope is that with time, along with the establishment of the theological seminary where pastors will train together, these challenges will be overcome.

David Goatley is Executive Secretary-Treasurer for the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, President of the North American Baptist Fellowship, and is a member of the BWA General Council and Executive Committee.

This youthful generation of Baptist ministers and leaders are, perhaps, the brightest examples of a new future of collaboration for Christ.

Our overemphasis on autonomy in US Baptist life continues to be a formidable challenge to our unity. Yet our common baptism in Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and the love of God so generously poured upon us is enough to see us make progress to better community and fellowship. Grace is sufficient!

John Bramble is the immediate past General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago and was a member of the BWA General Council.
A Year of Celebration
Baptists Mark 400 Years in 2009

The year 2009 holds great significance for Baptists worldwide. During this year, we mark the 400th anniversary of the historic Baptist movement. From humble beginnings in Amsterdam through decisive developments in London, Baptist witness has spread across the world, and in a year that we welcome joyfully, we will be engaging in a range of celebratory events.

At the very heart of the celebrations are the major events that will take place in the Netherlands.

The Annual Gathering will take place in Ede, Netherlands, July 27 to August 1, and will provide participants with an opportunity to recall and reflect on major moments in Baptist history. During daily corporate worship events, seminars, and forums, we will revisit the road Baptists have travelled. A major service of worship near the place of Baptist beginnings in Amsterdam, followed by a tour of the area, is expected to provide an unforgettable experience for all involved. We are investigating how we may provide the wider Baptist fellowship with a taste of the experience.

During the Gathering, delegates will have corporate opportunity to look up, to look back, to look around them and to look ahead as we survey the challenges and consider the resources God provides for the present and the future of the Baptist movement.

Immediately before the BWA Annual Gathering, Amsterdam 400 – a major celebration led by the European Baptist Federation – will be held from July 24-26. This event will offer the people of the region and also some from overseas an opportunity to celebrate God’s rich blessings on the Baptist movement in Europe.

The Baptist 400 celebrations will not be confined to the Netherlands. Resources will be supplied through the BWA website to assist local celebrations. For example, specially-prepared liturgies will be available for BWA Day, BWA Human Rights Day, and the various Days of Prayer sponsored by the BWA Women’s, Men, and Youth departments. In addition, the liturgy that will be used in the celebrations in Amsterdam, which will be a highly significant part of the Annual Gathering, will be offered to all churches as a resource for use on a Saturday or Sunday during the month of August.

Planned activities to mark the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the historic Baptist movement are to take place in many Baptist churches and related institutions. The BWA website, www.bwanet.org, will provide a calendar of activities reflecting those celebrations brought to our attention.

Already, Baptists have been registering for the historic celebrations scheduled to take place in the Netherlands. For further information, visit the following websites: http://www.bwanet.org/default.aspx?pid=819 and http://www.amsterdam400.org.

Let us join hands and hearts to celebrate what God has made possible and will continue to do through the Baptist movement.

Above left: An early 17th century Baptist congregation
Below: John Bunyan, Baptist pastor and author of Pilgrim’s Progress, being visited in jail by his blind daughter in 1667.

Image courtesy of Center for Study of the Life and Work of William Carey, D.D. (1761-1834), William Carey University, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, USA
The Baptist World Alliance held three Living Water (LW) conferences in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal during the month of November.

While attending a regional Living Water event in Nagaland, India, in December 2007, Baptist leaders from the three South Asian countries urged the BWA to host follow-up national conferences in their countries.

Several hundred delegates attended the series of meetings – 125 in Sri Lanka from November 13-16; 300 in Bangladesh, November 18-20; and approximately 400 delegates in Nepal, November 24-25.

In welcoming BWA leaders and delegates to the conference, Kingsley Perera, president of Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya, stated that the LW (Continued on next page)
Ruth Watson has served as the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) representative to the United Nations (UN) since 2002. Watson has had a life-long interest in issues of human rights, peace and justice, and the work of the UN. During her childhood, her father, a Baptist pastor in Illinois, wrote a treatise about the UN as an instrument for good. “The UN was part of my home life,” said Watson.

When she was a student at the Baptist Missionary Training School in Chicago, Illinois, Watson served as a counselor in a program that brought youth from the American Baptist Churches USA to visit the UN. Later, she became a representative for the organization, Church Women United, at the Church Center for the United Nations. She was assistant to George Younger, BWA’s previous UN representative, before taking on the role after his death.

In her capacity as representative, Watson attended briefing sessions of the Department of Public Information (DPI) each Thursday, as well as other meetings and events open to NGOs. The BWA has status with the UN as a non-governmental organization, and is accredited by both the DPI and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN.

As she described her role, “The task of the NGO representative is essentially to be an interpreter: interpreting to the BWA constituency the goals, tasks, and trials of the UN’s various bodies, and interpreting to the UN the issues, best practices, rights and dangers facing the religious communities around the world.”

She also participated in several religious groups, including the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN; the Ecumenical Working Group; and the Freedom of Religion and Belief Group.

Through her involvement in these groups, Watson helped to inform UN delegates and ambassadors about the work of Baptists and the religious community as a whole on issues such as HIV/AIDS and hunger. She also helped advocate for those whose human rights and religious liberty are threatened.

“Together [the religious NGOs] forge joint proposals regarding draft resolutions that are before the UN Commission, and together we plead our case to the appropriate Commission, often bringing diversity into a meaningful and strong unity that impresses and leads to policy commitments and then eventually to significant action,” said Watson.

In addition to her work at the UN, Watson, who holds an M.A. from the University of Chicago Divinity School, has held various ministry positions throughout her career. She served as Director of Christian Education for LaGrange Baptist Church in Illinois, Director of Children’s Work for the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church, coordinator for Mission Education for the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, and curriculum representative for Judson Press of American Baptist Churches USA. She also held faculty positions at New York Theological Seminary, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Garrett Theological Seminary.

Watson is now actively involved in ministry in her local church, Riverside Church in New York City. She is co-coordinator of the English Conversation Program, and she serves as a member of the church’s Global Justice, Disarmament and Peace Commission.

Watson completed her time of service as BWA representative at the end of 2008. The new BWA Division of Freedom and Justice will now be responsible for all UN matters.

The BWA is grateful to Watson for the years of valuable service she provided to the worldwide Baptist family.

(continued from page 23)

conference is an opportunity for leaders of the Baptist community “to reflect on the life-changing message that Jesus is the source of life-giving water to nourish our people, many of whom are socially oppressed, economically marginalized, politically powerless and spiritually pauperized.”

Bangladesh has three Baptist conventions and unions – Bangladesh Baptist Church Fellowship (BBCF), Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha, and Garo Baptist Convention of Bangladesh. In his welcome, BBCF General Secretary and coordinator for the conference, Leor Sarkar, said, “This Living Water conference has the potential to be the most important event Bangladesh Baptists have ever conducted, especially as it has brought the people of the three Baptist groups together to concentrate on sharing faith in Christ and on the importance of servant leadership.”

The Living Water conference was the first time that the three Baptist groups in Bangladesh have ever met together or collaborated in any event.

Daniel Subba, president of the Nepal Baptist Church Council said that, of the 23 million people in Nepal, only
Baptist leaders in the southern state of Karnataka in India have informed the Baptist World Alliance that persecution is on the rise in that state.

A Baptist leader informed the BWA by telephone on November 21 of the attacks, and requested prayer for those facing persecution. In an email dated October 31, another Baptist leader stated, “We are busy visiting churches that were attacked in recent times in our state,” and “we strongly feel that God’s people are uniting in prayers for peace and protection.”

Anti-Christian violence has increased significantly in India. The latest wave of violence began after the murder of a charismatic Hindu leader on August 23 in Orissa state in eastern India. Radical Hindus blame Christians for the killing, even though a militant Maoist group claimed responsibility. The violence, which spark converted several persecutory actions in Orissa, has since spread to other Indian states, including Karnataka.

More than 60 Christians in India have been killed and another 50,000 left homeless by the violence, mostly in Orissa.

An Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) story on November 18 reported that a Baptist ministerial student was arrested after being beaten by Hindu extremists in Karnataka. The minister in training was conducting a worship service in a house church when the worship was disrupted by the Hindu extremists. The principal of the Baptist Bible College that the student attends had also been arrested. Both were charged with “malicious acts to outrage religious feelings and punishment for criminal intimidation” while the student also faced a charge of “forceful conversion.”

EFI reported on November 17 about the arrest of another pastor in Karnataka. “Hindu extremists (of the) Vishwa Hindu Parishad accused a pastor of ‘forced’ conversion, beat him up, and also verbally abused Christian women on November 9.” The same report stated that another Christian in Karnataka was arrested on November 4 on charges of forced conversion.

Anti-Christian violence has also been experienced in Maharashtra, a state on the western coast of India, where, on November 15, a mob of 20 Hindu radicals vandalized a church, stripped and beat the pastor, and left him unconscious. Christians at the church were accused of distributing gospel tracts, but EFI reported that they were handing out flyers for a peace conference instead.

Other Indian states where anti-Christian violence has been reported include Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand.

Victims of anti-Christian violence in the eastern Indian state of Orissa
Letter from Orissa

Greetings from Balasore Technical School.

I am writing this mail with aching heart and agony. You all know of the communal riots against Christians in Orissa, Kandhamal District. The situation is getting worse every day and the government has become a mere spectator as it has become a political agenda for various political parties.

It has become more painful to see the Christian brothers and sisters from Kandhamal who are fleeing away for their own life, leaving behind their house, belongings, relatives, etc. They are taking shelter in various relief camps in other parts of Orissa run by churches and Christian organizations. Just because they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ the citizens of the nation are becoming refugees in their own nation. What more could happen to these people? As fellow Christians what we are going to do about this?

The communal riots continue as they keep on destroying the houses and churches and Christian properties. In addition to the relief camps in the district itself, many relief campuses are under operation in various places in Orissa. Balasore Technical School also accommodated around 75 people in our institution and we are feeding them with local resources.

It has become uncertain when these people will get back to their homes and live a normal life. It may even take months to get the situation back to normal. Many young people in the relief camps are uncertain about their studies and their future.

Balasore Technical School has planned to play an important role for the young people among the riot victims and is planning to train them in technical courses, which may become their means for livelihood.

Accordingly, we have contacted the people who are running the camps and asked them to identify the young people who can undergo the technical and vocational courses in our institution. We have identified 30 youth (20 girls and 10 boys) from various relief camps and admitted them here in our institution for various technical courses for a one year study program.

P. RAMESH KUMAR
Principal
Balasore Technical School
Orissa, India
September 28, 2006
Several church leaders in the United States have written to US President George W. Bush to protest the outbreak of violence against Christians in India, urging him “to hold the Indian government accountable to its own constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion and religious expression for all its citizens.”

The signatories, who include William Shaw, President of National Baptist Churches USA Inc, and Daniel Vestal, Executive Coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, urged the outgoing US president to express to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh “the US government’s abhorrence of the continued violence against Christians and other minorities within India’s borders.”

The church leaders drew attention to the anti-Christian violence that has taken place since the slaying of a Hindu leader and four adherents in the eastern Indian state of Orissa on August 23, stating that, even though a radical Maoist group claimed responsibility for the killing, “The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) blamed the deaths on the Indian Christian community.”

“Hindu extremist groups fostered civil unrest, initially attacking poor Christians in India’s eastern state of Orissa as well as Christian agencies who serve the poor and the needy from diverse religious backgrounds in that state.” Now the violence has spread to several other Indian states, the letter said.

More than 60 Christians have died from the outbreak of violence, and an estimated 50,000 are left homeless.

The church leaders’ letter, which was sent on November 7, quoted a remark made by President Bush when he signed into law a nuclear agreement between the US and India on October 8, “This agreement sends a signal to the world – nations that follow the path to democracy and responsible behavior will find a friend in the United States.”

Shaw, Vestal, and the more than 20 other leaders of churches and parachurch organizations told the president, “You should insist, in the strongest terms, that these reprehensible groups and the assenting local government agencies be brought into conformity with India’s rule of law. Only if India agrees and acts with goodwill toward all its citizens will it continue to be viewed as a responsible global partner worthy of a place on the world stage with other democratic nations.”

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam has written to the Indian prime minister expressing outrage at the violence, and the inability of the Indian authorities to curb the violence. In his letter sent on October 6, Callam expressed shock at “the grim situation facing Christians in Orissa,” and stated that he is “alarmed that it is taking so long to bring an end to the fierce persecution they are suffering.”

Callam urged the Indian leader “to intervene, in the best traditions of the Indian sub-continent, to bring relief to the people suffering in Orissa.”

More than 60 Christians have died from the outbreak of violence, and an estimated 50,000 are left homeless.
It was a satisfying experience to have attended the 150th anniversary of Baptist witness in Poland. To read the history of the country itself is to connect with a people who know the joy and pain of changing fortunes. Through the passage of time, God has certainly preserved them as a strong and determined people, courageous in the face of challenges.

It was on November 28, 1858, that Wilhelm Weist, missioner of the Prussian Association in Germany, baptized Gottfried Alf, a man born in Congress, Poland, on April 11, 1831. From the very beginning, when he asked questions that caused unease among the church authorities and many of the faithful, Alf came under pressure. He lost his teaching job and eventually, after his baptism, he lost also the support of his own father.

We are indebted to distinguished Baptist historian, Albert Wardin Jr., for his patient research that yielded Gottfried Alf: Pioneer of the Baptist Movement in Poland [Baptist Historical Society & Fields Publishing Inc., 2003]. Wardin makes accessible to the average reader the dramatic story of Alf’s patience, vision, faith and perseverance in the midst of persecution. Wisely, Baptists in Poland translated the work into Polish and the story of the exploits of Alf, Dr. Wardin’s great grand uncle, should be very well known among them.

While in Poland, it was good to hear Dr. Wardin tell the story orally, challenging the people to dare to hold on to the faith whatever their circumstances, and to be true to the tradition of courage and faithfulness that marks Baptist life in Poland.

Today, Polish Baptists are a people who know how important it is to count their blessings. When they assembled in the beautiful chapel at their Radosć Seminary, just outside Warsaw, they said thanks to some Baptists who had contributed significantly to the development of the church in Poland. Honorees served in the areas of preaching and the pastorate, in work among children, church building construction programs, church-state relations, Bible translation, and a range of other areas of vital service.

At the Jubilee service at the First Baptist Church in Warsaw, a large choir composed of singers from a number of Baptist choirs gave fine expression to the people’s praise. Representatives of church and state brought greetings to convey their joyful participation in the celebrations.

The long journey from Warsaw to Chelm was well worth it. Not only did we share in a memorable service of thanksgiving, but afterwards we gathered with the people for a love feast. A lavish fare marked the agape meal which also featured music and singing.

It is not far from Chelm that Gottfried Alf is buried. After his 67 years, his three marriages — his first two wives predeceased him — and his eleven children, the man who wore himself out in preaching the Gospel across the country, died when he was squeezed between the wagon and the gate by skittish horses.

Certainly, the memory of Alf’s conversion and baptism, his conscientious efforts to spread the Gospel among his people and the many occasions when he was imprisoned for his faith and witness should inspire Baptists in Poland and beyond. We should continue their work to share the faith with all who have not come into a personal, life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ.

Much pain attends a visit to the concentration camp at Auschwitz or at Majdanku. While visiting the latter, we were shaken by the stark reminder of the extent of human wickedness, and we remembered how life in the Spirit is impossible without the exercise of forgiveness.

It is clear, however, that God has been at work among the people of Poland. We take inspiration from the way in which the Baptists remembered their story and how cheerfully they celebrated it.
This volume places important primary sources of Baptist history at the fingertips of the serious scholar or the curious reader: letters, declarations, resolutions, news articles, book excerpts, and more.

There are some gems, such as Thomas Helwys’ audacious declaration in 1612 that “The king is a mortal man and not God, therefore he has no power over the immortal souls of his subjects, to make laws and ordinances for them and to set spiritual lords over them.”

Included is the series of communications in 1644 between Roger Williams, who defended religious liberty and decried persecution for conscience’s sake, and John Cotton, who defended strong action against those who are of “an erroneous and blind conscience” if they possess “a boisterous and arrogant spirit, to the disturbing of the peace.”

Thomas Jefferson’s famous quote, “Building a wall of separation between Church and State,” was in his written response to a letter sent on October 7, 1801, by the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut, congratulating the president on his election to office, and seeking reassurances on the state of religious liberty in the United States.

Other outstanding documents included are from John Leland in 1791 – “If religion cannot stand… without the aid of law, it is likely to fall soon”; William Carey in 1792 – “Alas! Many are returning to the poisoned cups which drugged that declining generation”; and George Truett in 1920 – “There is a wide difference between toleration and liberty.”

One is able to read the sad legacy of the split in the United States’ Baptist family in the 1840s over slavery, but also the hopeful coming together of Baptists and the formation of the Baptist World Alliance in 1905.

Readings in Baptist History focuses primarily on documents originating within the United States, thus challenging other serious researchers to publish sources from the many other contexts where Baptists witness. Such richness was tantalizingly hinted at with the inclusion of a few documents from Britain, a document from Russia, and one from former American slave George Lisle in Jamaica who “was the first American Baptist foreign missionary, preceding William Carey… by at least fifteen years.”

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

In Honor
Gifts to the Baptist World Alliance were given by:
Child Development Committee of First Baptist Church, Orangeburg, SC in honor of Mary Raymond

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JANUARY/MARCH 2009 29
David Charley, former president of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB), died on November 7 at the age of 90.

Active in Baptist work throughout his life, Charley served as the president of the Yorkshire Baptist Association in England in 1971 and was president of the BUGB from 1982-83. For many years he was Chair of the Governors at Northern Baptist College in Manchester, England, and also served on the General Committee of BMS World Mission. He was a deacon and a trustee at Blenheim Baptist Church in Leeds, England, where he was a member for 55 years.

Charley was also involved in the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), serving on the General Council and the Ethics Commission. In 1990, he and a group of friends travelled to the BWA Congress in Seoul, Korea, by means of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

A medical doctor by profession, Charley was a highly respected chest specialist who worked in hospitals in Leeds for much of his career. In 1977, he received the Order of the British Empire from the Queen for work he did in chairing a group which greatly improved the lives of physically disabled people in Leeds.

Charley is survived by three children. A memorial service was held at South Parade Baptist Church in Headingley, England, on November 21.

Edna Lee de Gutiérrez from Mexico, president of the Baptist World Alliance Women’s Department (BWAWD) from 1985-1990 and vice president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) from 1990-1995, died on Sunday, October 5.

“The BWA is greatly indebted to many gifted women around the world whose leadership among us has been a source of great inspiration,” said Neville Callam, BWA General Secretary. “Edna Lee de Gutiérrez falls in this tradition. May her passing be but her transition into eternal bliss.”

Gutiérrez was involved in Baptist work in Latin America throughout her life. She served as president of the Mexican Baptist Youth Union, president of the Nicaraguan Baptist Convention, and president of the Baptist Women’s Union of Latin America.

She was active in ministry in the local church. Her husband, Rolando Gutiérrez, a Nicaraguan, was pastor of churches in Managua, Nicaragua, and Mexico City, Mexico. Upon returning to her native country of Mexico after 10 years in Nicaragua, the couple wanted to begin a ministry for youth and found a small church of 30 members to sponsor the ministry. Horeb Baptist Church (HBC) in Mexico City grew into a strong church with many educational programs.

“Edna was an outstanding leader,” said Patsy Davis, Director of the BWAWD. “She will be remembered for her great accomplishments during her five years as president of the BWA Women’s Department, as well as her passion, self-sacrifice, and example.”

Soon after Gutiérrez’s election as president of the BWAWD in 1985, an earthquake caused severe damage in Mexico City. She and the women of HBC used the church as a rescue center, feeding a hot meal to 6,000 people a day for three months, and caring for 45 families living in tents.

During her term of office as BWAWD president, Gutiérrez represented the BWA as an official delegate to the World Congress of “Women toward 2000 without Nuclear Weapons for Peace, Equality and Development” held in Moscow.

Gutiérrez was a skilled preacher. She had the opportunity to speak at assemblies and church services in several countries as president of the BWA Women’s Department, and as part of her other leadership roles. After her husband’s death in March 1997, she served as pastor of HBC until December 1998.

In addition to her service as president of the BWAWD and as vice president of the BWA, Gutiérrez was a member of the BWA General Council, the Executive Committee and the Church Leadership Commission. She was also a part of the Congress Program Committee that planned the 1995 Baptist World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Gutiérrez is survived by three children. Her memorial service and burial took place on October 6 in Mexico City.


He also served ABCUSA, a member body of the Baptist World Alliance, as President of the Ministers Council and Director of Education for Idaho, Montana, Utah and Detroit, and he pastored Judson Memorial Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

He was married to his wife, Marilyn, for 62 years. Surviving relatives include Mary Ann Tucker, Walter E. and Denise Pulliam, and Susan and Lyell Ernst.

A memorial service was held at the Seattle First Baptist Church in Seattle, Washington, on Sunday, December 7.
A Tribute to Dr. Billy Graham on his 90th Birthday

I was just one among the 120,000 well wishers who sent Dr. Billy Graham a personal greeting on his 90th birthday on November 7, 2008. He celebrated this milestone birthday at a private barbeque near his mountain home in North Carolina.

“I’ve learned that these latter years can be some of the most fulfilling of our lives,” the evangelist said. “I am grateful for each day; thankful for the measure of health I have and am overwhelmed by this celebration.”

In my personal greeting I thanked Billy Graham for being a shaping influence in each decade of my life.

In the 1940s, when I was an eight year old, he visited my home church. My late father, Arthur, was one of the British pastors who invited him to visit England when Billy was a young evangelist. I can’t recall the message he preached at my local church, but I have a distinct memory of the excitement his preaching generated in the congregation.

In 1954, London was the venue of his first international crusade. Billy preached in London 72 times over 12 weeks, sharing the Gospel with crowds totalling more than two million, of whom 38,000 came forward to make decisions for Jesus Christ. I was 13 when I made my first public commitment to Jesus Christ at this London Crusade. I had never doubted the truth of the good news of the Gospel, but it was Billy’s preaching that brought me to a distinct moment of commitment to Jesus Christ 54 years ago.

During the 1960s I was a student at Spurgeons College and recall my college principal, Dr. George Beasley Murray, returning a changed man from the Berlin Congress on Evangelism. He told the students he had been challenged by Billy Graham to be more intentionally evangelistic in his preaching ministry. It was deeply impressive to hear a New Testament scholar give his testimony as to how God had challenged him through an evangelism conference.

It was in Stockholm, Sweden, at the BWA Congress in 1975 that I heard Billy preach to thousands at the final open air service of the Congress. His preaching was for me a reminder that we don’t need to make the Gospel relevant – we simply demonstrate its relevance with spiritual power and authority.

By attending Mission England in May 1984, God revitalized my ministry of “doing the work of an evangelist.” I was overwhelmed with emotion as I witnessed hundreds of people streaming forward in response to Billy’s invitation to follow Christ. This experience challenged me as a local church pastor to be more persuasive in my preaching and during the succeeding years, I have seen a greater harvest of people coming to Christ through my preaching ministry.

In the mid 1990s I had the immense privilege of accompanying Dr. Denton Lotz and Dr. Nilson Fanini on a private visit to Dr. and Mrs. Graham in their mountain home in Montreat, North Carolina, and the memory of their gracious hospitality and fellowship lives with me to this day.

In the first year of the new millennium, I was one of the 10,000 delegates to the Amsterdam 2000 World Conference for Evangelists and was inspired and challenged from the feast of teaching and fellowship. The conference was planned to be a “baton event” when Billy’s peer group passed on the torch of international Christian leadership to a new generation. The only shadow over the gathering was the absence of Billy and Ruth Graham owing to their frail health.

Although Billy Graham’s public ministry has ceased, his wisdom is still available. Billy reportedly told his friends on his 90th birthday, “I know how to die but nobody ever taught me how to grow old.” The tentative title of his last book is “Nearing Home.”

I am reminded of the words of John Bunyan in his little masterpiece, *The Heavenly Footman*:

> “Thou must run a long and tedious journey before you come to the land of promise…
> …perseverance is a greater part of the cross.”

Billy Graham is God’s long distance journeyman who knows that grace is gradually leading him home. He has been a mentor to all of us in the spirit of Hebrews 13:8.

I record my deep and lasting appreciation to God for his life and ministry.
Please join us for a special evening of fellowship, music and a thrilling challenge to our lives as Christians.

Window on the World Banquet

Saturday, February 28, 2009
7:00 PM
Sheraton National Hotel Ballroom
Arlington, Virginia, USA

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Tony Campolo
Author, sociologist and passionate follower of Jesus Christ

Meet BWA President David Coffey
BWA General Secretary Neville Callam
and Baptist leaders from around the world

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Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amos 5:24