Asian Baptists Growing Strong
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Thanks Lotz!
ASIANS HONOR LOTZ

“I do not have anything to give, but this one thing I promise, that I will continue to work for the freedom of our people.”

With these words, Saw Simon, recipient of the BWA Human Rights Award in 2000, paid tribute to Denton Lotz, retiring General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance. Simon is principal of the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College in the Mae La refugee camp on the Thailand-Myanmar border. The camp is one of several and houses approximately 50,000 refugees who fled military and repressive rule in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma.

Simon was speaking at a luncheon in honor of Lotz and wife, Janice, held May 4 during the Asian Baptist Federation (ABF) Congress in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Gifts and tributes were presented to Denton and Janice on the behalf of 21 conventions and unions throughout Asia. Approximately one hundred and fifty guests attended the event.

Tribute was also paid by ABF General Secretary Bonny Resu, who joined others in lauding Lotz for his courage, vision, example and leadership. Lotz was commended for his emphasis on theological education and his instrumentality in forming the Baptist International Conference on Theological Education (BICTE), his struggle for human rights and religious freedom throughout the world, and for playing a leading role in helping to ‘internationalize’ the leadership of the BWA.

The luncheon was one of several events to be held to honor the ministry of Lotz, who became BWA General Secretary in 1988 and retires officially in December 2007. The North American Baptist Fellowship held a banquet in honor of the couple in March in Virginia.

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COVER PHOTO
Retiring General Secretary Denton Lotz with his wife Janice.

Unless otherwise noted, photos in the issue are by BWA staff.
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Julie Justus reflects on the ‘Baptist Blitz Build,’ where more than 450 volunteers traveled to Baton Rouge to build Habitat for Humanity houses for victims of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina.

In Memoriam

Baptists Discuss Autonomy
A BWA Symposium was held at the German Baptist Seminary in Elstal to discuss Baptist ecclesiology, the theology of the church — focusing on the autonomy of the local church and its relationship to the larger Baptist community.
Dear Baptist Friends Worldwide:

There comes a time in a person’s life when he must bid farewell to those whom he has loved and with whom he has worked. For 27 years it has been my privilege to minister through the Baptist World Alliance, first as Director of Evangelism and the Youth Department, and then for the past 19 years as General Secretary. Following the tragic death of Gerhard Claas, I was suddenly thrust into a role of leadership in the BWA. These have been wonderful and difficult years. Without the support, encouragement and prayers of friends like you, I could never have completed my ministry. But, now, with the Apostle Paul I am able to say, “The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

This is my last editorial. How can one write a conclusion to 27 years of ministry in a short editorial? Should I write a summary of events? Tell stories of God’s amazing grace in the lives of persecuted brothers and sisters? Thank close colleagues and friends? Review the ups and downs of the life of the general secretary? Tell the “rest of the story” of unfair accusations? How does one say farewell after so many years? I will not go the route listed above. Sufficient words over these years have flowed from my pen. As General Secretary I have written 204 editorials for BWA News and 76 editorials for the Baptist World magazine. That’s enough! With the preacher in Ecclesiastes, I can say, “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”

Therefore, as a farewell, I would like to give a word of encouragement and challenge from the Apostle Paul. Paul’s challenge to young Timothy is relevant for all Christian leaders today. His charge is really a “job description” of a leader:

- Preach the word!
- Teach with patience!
- Be urgent!
- Be steady!
- Convince!
- Endure suffering!
- Rebuke!
- Do the work of an evangelist!
- Exhort!
- Fulfill your ministry!

I love the Bible. The daily reading of the Scriptures has been the source of my spiritual food. It has kept me focused on Christ and has spoken to me by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible challenges us, rebukes us, encourages us, and shows us the proper way to go. The Bible is alive with encouragements and commands. In reading the Gospels, I have been impressed that contrary to great religious leaders, Jesus does not philosophize or meditate, but his words are challenges and commands: Go! Come! Follow me! Be hearers! Be doers! Take up your cross! Deny yourself!

The Christian life is a call to action in the light of our crucified and risen Lord. The Apostle Paul carries on this tradition of challenges and commands. This is obvious in the charge he gives to Timothy in the list above. He prefaces his charge to Timothy with the words: “I charge you in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.” Here we are reminded that Christ is and must be the center of all leadership. Christ is the judge of the past, and our future hope.

In saying farewell to you, my friends in the Baptist World Alliance, I can only say, “Thank you for the trust and confidence you have placed in me over the years. Thank you for your love and prayers which have sustained me!”

There is not space to make a long list of individuals whom I really need to thank and who have been so supportive and encouraging over the years. Words would fail if I were to list all of the friends, presidents, and committee chairs who have accompanied me on this great journey! But, please permit me to thank my family. I thank my wife, Janice, for her love and prayerful support over these 27 years. She has made our home a welcoming family, literally serving thousands over the years who have passed through our front door. Our children, John-Paul, Alena, and Carsten have been a source of joy. We look forward to years of enjoyment with our eight grandchildren.

Finally, please give that same support, love and encouragement to my successor, Neville Callam, general secretary nominee. Neville is a man of great faith and intellect. He also will cherish your prayers and encouragement.

One last word: in addition to saying thank you, I must also ask forgiveness if I have offended anyone. Keeping a large family together is not easy. There is not always uniformity of thought or action. Please continue to work for that central doctrine for which Christ died and lives: unity. Our unity will have great consequences in leading men and women to faith in Christ (John 17).

So, after 27 years, indeed the time of my departure has come! Thank you and may the Christ of all joy continue to unite us together into that fellowship of love for which He prayed!

FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY
Denton Lotz
Reconciliation Talks Among Baptists

The Russian Baptist Public Council, a loose organization of 12 unions, mission agencies and associations, held its third convention in central Moscow in mid-February.

The 150 leaders who attended the event sought to reconcile after years of divisions and breakups among Russian Baptists. The group, which includes the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, a member body of the BWA, and the Association of Brethren Churches, “Represents churches as well as additional mission agencies and initiatives of Baptist origin,” a report out of the council said.

Vice president of the Russian Union, Peter Mitskevich, emphasized that the council’s goal is spiritual unity, and that it was not a structural movement. “We are concerned above all about unity in spirit and understanding,” Mitskevich said.

Peter Rumachek from the Brethren Churches said “God has chosen to put a stop to the centrifugal powers. We no longer see only ourselves, we see each other. The Lord has shown that we need each other in order to fulfill his will.”

Victor Abramov of the ethnic-Russian Baptists in Latvia bemoaned the “Disease of unforgiveness” which is a present reality, while Joseph Bondarenko from the United States, in lauding the reconciliation talks, said that he “Had been waiting 30 years for such a development.”

A declaration by the council affirmed that “We do not want the tragic separation caused by our fathers to determine the fate of our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We will do all we can to overcome the injuries caused by the separation and leave them behind us.”

Russian Baptists endured a major split in the early 1960s when unregistered churches broke off from the national convention. Soviet law required all congregations and churches to register but some churches, including Baptists, defied the law and refused to register. This created tensions that led to eventual disunity between registered and unregistered churches.

The Russian reconciliation movement is one of several among Baptists around the world to heal old wounds and to come together in unity. Baptists in North America plan a major convocation in early 2008 in “Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant,” which will bring together diverse Baptist groups in Canada and the United States to work together in areas such as racism, poverty, HIV/AIDS, stewardship of material resources, recovery of spiritual roots, religious liberty, faith and public policy, among others. The convocation will be the largest cooperative action among Baptists in North America and is expected to draw more than 20,000 participants to the event.

In the West African Country of Cameroon, three Baptist groups formed the Cameroon Baptist Alliance, and have cooperated in mission and program activities that include evangelism, education and training, health service, communication, mutual assistance, and socio-economic activities. The alliance consists of the Cameroon Baptist Convention, Native Baptist Church, and the Union of Baptist Churches of Cameroon.

Similar alliances and reconciliations have also taken place in Chile and Ecuador in Latin America.
UBLA Elects New President

Raquel Contreras was unanimously elected president of the Union of Baptists in Latin America (UBLA) by its Executive Committee on April 27, 2007, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She will serve as president until April 2009.

UBLA is one of six regional bodies of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and represents conventions and unions throughout South America, Central America and Mexico.

In a statement announcing the election of Contreras, UBLA said, “She stands out for her many gifts and her leadership capability in different areas and situations….We commend her life to God’s hands so that she be granted wisdom, His grace and strength for this new phase of UBLA.”

Contreras was recently reelected president of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile, a union of 27,781 members and 326 churches. Under her leadership, the union reconciled with the Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission after 30 years of division and conflict between the two groups. The convention and union have remained separate bodies, but they now enjoy a relationship of cordiality and cooperation and have held joint worship services and meetings.

The BWA has benefited from Contreras’ membership on various committees and commissions. She is a Vice President of the BWA and a member of the Executive Committee and General Council, the Resolutions Committee, the Membership Committee and the Congress Program Committee, which is planning the 2010 Baptist World Congress in Hawaii. She also serves on the Implementation Task Force which is mandated to make recommended structural and other changes to the BWA.

“Raquel Contreras’ election as president of UBLA is an affirmation of her great leadership skills,” said BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz. “As president of the Baptist union in Chile she has worked for unity and mission. It is those qualities that make her an excellent president of UBLA, which needs leadership at this time to focus precisely on unity in our conventions and unions and to rekindle the missionary flame within our congregations.

“We pray God’s blessings upon Raquel Contreras as she works for the growth of Baptists in all of Latin America.”

Bible Society Building Bombed

A huge bomb blast severely damaged the building housing the Bible Society in Gaza, Palestine.

Hanna Massad, pastor of Gaza Baptist Church, reported that the massive explosion occurred in the wee hours of Sunday morning, shortly before 2:00 am, April 15. “This time the damage was much worse than the previous explosion which happened almost a year ago,” Massad said.

The bombers first kidnapped the security guard, beat him, and left him in an unsafe area of the city, Massad reported. There were no other reported injuries.

A press release from the Bible Society confirmed Massad’s report, stating that masked gunmen abducted the security guard outside the Bible Society and placed a large bomb at the door an hour later. It is speculated that a small, radical Muslim group carried out this, and other similar attacks throughout Gaza, largely aimed at Internet cafes and music stores.

Though the society was previously attacked last year when two pipe bombs exploded, damaging the building, “Recently there have been no clear threats, so the attack comes at a very surprising time,” the press release said.

The Palestinian Bible Society, which has been operating in the Gaza Strip since 1999, is reported to have a good relationship with Muslims. Reports are that Muslim neighbors assisted in the clean-up operation.

The building, which houses the Bible Society bookshop, also includes a computer center, a library and a community development center, and is the base for one of the largest relief agencies in the Gaza Strip.
able to finish my sermon because there was heavy shooting close to the church building while I was preaching. The people became very nervous and afraid, so we stopped the meeting,” he said in an email message to the Baptist World Alliance.

Both Fatah and Hamas are engaged in a civil war that has intensified over the past several weeks. Fatah, which previously controlled the Palestinian Authority government, became the main opposition party after it lost its majority to Hamas in the Palestinian parliament in a general election in January 2006. Hamas won 76 of the 132 seats in the chamber, while Fatah won 43 seats. Since Hamas’ election victory, sharp infighting has occurred between the two groups, which recently escalated into full civil war, leading to many Palestinian deaths.

Massad reported that a Baptist family had its house bombed, slightly injuring one family member, and that the Gaza Baptist Church was commandeered by Palestinian Authority police as a lookout point. The building, which is six stories high and was dedicated in November 2006, was similarly seized and used during another major flare-up in February. “In the last few days, the PA Police took our church building. . . . When they asked us, we said no, but they broke in,” Massad said in his email, dated June 15. The Gaza Baptist Church building lies close to the main police station in Gaza. Massad reported that equipment, including a computer, was stolen after the building was seized.

BWA President David Coffey and General Secretary Denton Lotz assured Baptists in Gaza that the world is praying for peace and their safety. “We pray for peace in the Middle East and between Fatah and Hamas. With prophets of old we cry out, ‘O Lord, how long?’” And in an appeal to Baptists around the world to engage in more intense prayer, the BWA leaders urged, “Please pray and work for peace in the Middle East and around the world.”

“Most of the people in Gaza are watching and waiting to see what will happen. Nothing is clear. All the borders are closed. We are in the biggest prison in the world,” Massad, in bemoaning the precarious state of Palestinians in Gaza, said.

But despite the fighting and tensions, Massad reported that “We continue to experience the power of God’s presence, His peace and love at this time.”

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The Baptist Haiti Mission (BHM) held a spiritual retreat for students in BHM-sponsored schools for two days in mid-April. More than 65,000 students participated in the assemblies and Bible lessons as they “Took time away from their daily studies to focus on something of even greater eternal value—their relationship with Christ,” BHM explained on its website.

BHM, a Baptist World Alliance member convention, has been actively involved in providing education for the people of Haiti since its founding over fifty years ago. To remedy widespread illiteracy and lack of education in the country, BHM created a network of primary schools connected with local churches. The majority of the 300 BHM-sponsored schools are in communities where no other schools exist, and where children would otherwise not receive any education.

Although more than half of the children of Haiti still do not attend any school, progress is being made. In 1940, when the first BHM missionaries arrived, only two percent of the population was literate; now, due in large part to the efforts of the BHM, almost half of the present generation can read, according to BHM’s website.

BHM’s schools also provide a strong Christian education for the students. During the April retreat coordinated by Pastor Solect Jean Baptiste, the Superintendent of BHM’s Department of Education, schools across the country all focused on Ephesians 5:15-16, “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” The students reflected upon what it means to ‘live carefully’ as a Christian. A special song based on the verses was written for the retreat.

Teachers used mini-dramas and storyboards to illustrate Biblical concepts to the children. At school-wide assemblies, students sang praise and worship songs. Many students accepted Christ during the two days of spiritual learning and reflection.

In summarizing the need for the retreat, BHM said, “In a world filled with uncertainties, these future leaders simply cannot have too much time to rest in God’s Word.”
The Zomi Theological College (ZTC) in Chin State, Myanmar, has put together an ambitious 100-year community development plan. Agriculturally focused, the plan seeks to address the three ‘sins’ of shifting cultivation, undisciplined livestock rearing, and deforestation.

In a country dependent on agriculture, the mainstay of the economy, the aim is to arrest the slash and burn method that destroys forests and makes the soil barren after years of use. The ultimate goal is to enable the communities to attain full economic independence by the year 2100.

Planned over four phases, the current phase is to ensure full education and awareness by 2020. Other phases are improved agricultural methods and production by 2060, and increased sales and export beginning in 2080. By 2100, the end of the final phase, there will be a centennial celebration which would mark the new “Land of abundance,” which, by then, it is hoped Myanmar would be.

Do Sian Thang, principal of the 120-student institution which was formed in 1953, said the students are convinced of the need for the program, as most “Are from an agricultural background.” The graduates, trained to become pastors, also become community leaders, Thang said. Currently, the college has an integrated farming project just five miles from the campus. Thang calls it, “Theological education in the classroom and theological education in practice,” stating that “The aim is to produce people for church ministry and Christian service.”

Thang, who took an extended trip to the United States, visited the offices of the Baptist World Alliance and shared his vision with staff. A special guest of Judson College in Elgin, Illinois, the man who has been associated with ZTC since 1981 believes that the initiative will spread to the Chin people, and will revolutionize their approach to agriculture and livestock rearing, as well as enhance their understanding of ecology.

Ruled by a military dictatorship since the early 1960s, Myanmar, which had its name changed from Burma in 1989, has a population of more than 50 million and is the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia. Largely Buddhist, only six percent of the population is Christian, but the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) is one of the fastest growing in the world, moving from a membership of approximately 500,000 in 1995 to more than one million in 2005. With 132 ethnic groups in the country, Baptist concentration is mainly among the Chin, Kachin and the Karen peoples.

The Zomi Theological College, which is affiliated to the regional Zomi Baptist Convention (ZBC) and the national MBC, has a relationship with the Myanmar Institute of Theology, the leading Christian seminary in the country which serves several ethnic and other denominational groups. Baptists in Chin State, the location of the ZTC, are estimated at 100,000 baptized believers and a total community of 200,000. There are approximately 1,000 local churches in 25 associations that make up the ZBC.

With its goal of ‘Food always in the Home’ (FAITH), the college hopes to have both a spiritual and economic impact on the country.
Report by Vincent Wood

We of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF) expected much, and we experienced much. Really the response from our involvement in the Cricket World Cup (CWC) Evangelistic Project was beyond our expectation.

The International Cricket Council CWC 2007 tournament started in the West Indies with warm-up matches on March 5. These were followed by group stage matches, super eight matches, semi-finals and concluded with the final on April 28 in Barbados. The matches were played in nine territories—Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, Trinidad and St. Vincent. The CBF has member bodies in these countries.

We thank God for the Cricket World Cup because we were able to be involved in the distribution of water bottles (Aquafina, the official water for distribution for the CWC) and specially printed gospel tracts. Eighty thousand of these tracts were printed. Some of our member bodies, Jamaica and Barbados and a few more, gave out ‘Hope 2007’ pocket guides and another booklet, ‘Beyond the Boundaries.’ The pocket guide highlighted, among other things, Ridley Jacobs’ testimony as a Christian. Jacobs was a former wicketkeeper of the West Indies Cricket team. We distributed 12,912 bottles of water with the theme: “Jesus Christ, the Living Water (free) drink and thirst no more.”

We know that the seed of the Gospel was sown. Some persons offered to pay for the water, but we informed them that the water was free, compliments of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. Cricket-lovers going to the games were very receptive. They did not only take the water, but we observed them reading the tracts.

In addition to distributing water, a feature of our CWC Evangelistic Project was the hosting of religious concerts in some of the territories that provided cricket fans an alternative place to go after the matches. These concerts were held to offer spiritual strength and ‘upliftment.’

We had volunteers working with us from the United States of America including from Virginia, from the University of Mobile in Alabama, and from Lamberton, New Jersey. These volunteers enjoyed the ministry at the CWC to the fullest.

Our people are still talking about this wonderful opportunity that God gave to us to share the Gospel message in this wonderful way, and we are praising God. As local pastors, many of us were engaged in this event, and we are pleased. This is the biggest evangelistic project/ministry ever undertaken by the CBF.

It says that together we can make things happen, with the help of God. I see this as the turning point in the existence of the CBF. As we thank God for the CWC 2007, we must ask God to open other doors to us so that we can continue to minister to those who need Jesus Christ in their lives.

“May we as a Caribbean people always fulfill our mission to the honor and glory of God.”

Vincent Wood is a BWA vice president and the former president of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship

We know the seed of the Gospel was sown. . . . Our people are still talking about this wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel message.
By Eron Henry

For a continent buffeted by natural and man-made disasters, Asia shows a dynamism that is difficult to match elsewhere. Economies such as India, China, and Vietnam have joined longstanding ones such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore as among the most dynamic in the world.

And despite recurrent natural disasters in Indonesia, parts of India, and Bangladesh, as well as politically fractious countries such as Sri Lanka, Fiji, and Myanmar, Asia is, at present, one of the more progressive continents in the world in terms of economic growth and development.

Despite political and economic concerns on parts of the continent, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and others show a stability and opportunities that are the envy of other countries and regions.

The dynamism of Asia was evident during the 7th Asian Baptist Congress held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from May 2 to 6. From excellent renditions and choreography by several North East Indian Baptist choirs, to cultural presentations from the host country, the event was colorful, even playful, yet filled with a deep spirituality that was infectious throughout.

There was no glossing over the innumerable difficulties faced by Christians in Asia. Christianity is by far and away the minority of the major religions. Although India has 2.5 million Baptist believers, this is in a country that has a population of more than one billion inhabitants, and Baptist witness and faith is largely concentrated among tribal groups in the North East. The same holds for Myanmar. Even though there are 1.1 million Baptists in Myanmar (formerly Burma), Christians still make up only six percent of the population and Baptists are found largely among minority tribal groups, such as the Chins, Kachins and Karens.

And repression is widespread. A young Baptist Christian from Bhutan (name withheld for security reasons) was imprisoned a number of times, tortured, and otherwise abused for his faith. The president of one convention (country not identified due to security concerns) had his passport seized...
and thus could not attend the meetings in Chiang Mai. The four delegates who made it from that country were absolutely certain they would be interrogated by government security personnel on their return home.

In parts of India, radical Hindus do their best to eradicate or curtail Christianity. In Myanmar, which is almost 90 percent Buddhist, the military leaders often use the dominant faith as a means of exerting repressive control over the minority ethnic and religious groups.

And then there is the story of Baptist and human rights activist Amelia Jigibalom of West Papua in Indonesia, the only female of more than 20 who were arrested and jailed for almost five years for agitating for the independence of West Papua from Indonesia. In other parts of Indonesia, Muslim groups occasionally attack churches and Christians.

Yet Asia exudes a freshness that is contagious. The color, the energy, the hope, the drive to spread the Gospel, despite hardships and risks to life and property, continues without even the slightest hint of letting up. In landlocked Nepal, home of Mt. Everest and much of the Himalayan range of high mountains, religious freedom is declared, but far from guaranteed. Yet, despite the fact that the country is historically Hindu, Christian churches are growing rapidly. In 1992, there were just eight Baptist churches when the Nepal Baptist Church Council (NBCC) was formed. Now there are 90 churches and 400 other fellowships of less than 20 members. The BWA has partnered with the NBCC through financial support for ministry and evangelism, such as assisting with Nepali cross-cultural missionaries. The level of scholarship and leadership runs deep on the continent.

Rachael Tan, Associate Dean for the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary (ABGTS) in Taiwan, can stand her ground in a room of the best theologians in the west.

Alongla Aier, a founder and teacher at Oriental Theological Seminary in Nagaland, North East India, is as good a preacher and exegete as anyone else the world can offer. Wood-Ping Chu, elected at the congress to serve as Asian Baptist Federation President, is from the highest rung as an administrator, shown in his competence and efficiency as General Secretary of the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong. And Bonny Resu, Asian Baptist General Secretary, showed his high levels of competence in leading a team that put on a congress of the highest and best caliber.

But Asia has a long way to go and much to do to fulfill its potential. Despite the great work being done by ABGTS, a consortium of nine seminaries in eight countries, theological education and ministerial training is in grave shortage, as exemplified in Cambodia, a country with almost no trained leadership, even though Baptist churches multiplied rapidly over the previous decade moving from zero to 180 churches. Some of the stronger conventions, with large and prosperous, even affluent, memberships, such as in South Korea, seem disinterested as far as the affairs of the Asian federation goes. Fiji, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Australia and other countries of the South Pacific feel slightly alienated. Attempts are being made to address...
In the latter concern, with the name of the Asian Baptist Federation being changed to Asia Pacific Baptist Federation, to more accurately reflect the membership and composition of the regional body.

But despite challenges: horrendous disasters such as the December 2004 tsunamis that took a quarter million lives and displaced many more in eleven countries; earthquakes and floods that have rocked Indonesia and elsewhere; poverty that still pervades city slums and deeply rural, often hilly and mountainous areas, even in countries deemed economically healthy; and antagonism to Christianity in Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist dominated lands across the continent, Baptist Christianity in Asia has a bright future.

The Asian federation’s aim “To celebrate the glory and love of Jesus Christ in worship expressions” is found in the 7th congress theme song, set to a bouncy,
catchy Jamaican reggae rhythm that summarizes the continent’s trials and triumphs:
In the midst of Tsunami Jesus Cares!
In the midst of an earthquake Jesus Cares!
Amidst persecution Jesus Cares!
In times of trouble Jesus Cares!
Whatever the cost, whatever the pain;
Whatever it takes we will stand.
From north to south; and east to west.
Proclaiming the gospel,
Jesus Cares! Jesus Cares! Jesus Cares!

Facing page, top: New Asian Baptist Federation president, Wood-Ping Chu, being prayed for by BWA and ABF leaders during installation ceremony in Chiang Mai, Thailand.
The Baptist World Alliance’s 4th Living Water conference was held in the northern Thailand city of Chiang Mai from April 30 to May 2, 2007. It followed successive Living Water conferences in Russia, Brazil, and Kenya, and maintained the strong emphasis on evangelism and servant leadership that characterized each of the earlier events. It too had strong, biblical preaching, participatory focus groups where delegates could share their experiences of life as Baptists in Asia, and wonderful, exuberant praise and deeply moving worship. The 250 delegates embraced wholeheartedly the theme, ‘Living Water,’ and many expressed thanks to God for the experience.

Baptists have a long history of mission activity in Thailand. Today the churches among the Thai people, and among ethnic groups like the Karen, Lahu, Lisu and Akha, are developing their own distinctive patterns of church life and worship. The Living Water conference, however, was not specifically for the Thai churches, but for the churches throughout the whole of Asia. It preceded the Asian Baptist Federation’s (ABF) Congress and brought strength and support to that event. Recipients of Living Water scholarships were able to remain for the Congress and enjoyed the inspiration of the Asian Baptists’ vast gathering.

A feature of the Chiang Mai Living Water conference was the cooperation between Living Water and the ABF’s Development conference that concentrated more on ‘Deed’ than on ‘Word.’ While Living Water stresses both proclamation and ministries of compassion and physical transformation, it underlines the vital need to share faith in Jesus Christ through Ministries of Evangelism and discipleship. However, by the two

President of the BWA, David Coffey, knelt and washed the feet of delegates.
conferences working in tandem, we made a statement that the Christian message is both word and deed. We need to demonstrate and proclaim the Good News in Jesus Christ.

As in Brazil and Kenya, a positive highlight of the Living Water event was when the President of the BWA, David Coffey, knelt and washed the feet of six delegates to the conference. One young woman, when asked to participate, thought she was being asked to wipe the feet of others. When she suddenly realized it was her feet to be washed, and by our leader, she was overwhelmed with emotion. It was a deeply spiritual moment for her and she testified later that at that moment she sensed the Lord calling her to full-time Christian service.

Thanks be to God.

Tony Cupit is the coordinator of the Living Water program.

Living Water underlines the vital need to share faith in Jesus Christ through ministries of evangelism and discipleship.
Pressure Increases on Myanmar Refugees

Saw Simon, principal of the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College and recipient of the 2000 Baptist World Alliance Human Rights Award, has appealed for prayer on the behalf of Myanmar (Burma) refugees.

"Please pray for us. The fighting between the DKBA/SPDC troops and the KNLA, the Karen National Liberation Army, continues along the border, making people living in the camp to live in fear of possible attack," Simon pleaded in a letter sent to the BWA headquarters in the Washington, D.C. metro area in the United States in April.

Simon, who was recognized by the BWA in 2000 for his work in the refugee camps in Northern Thailand and along the border with Myanmar, implored the world, “Please pray that God will intervene and enable us to live in peace and dignity as human beings created in His own image.”

Myanmar, a country of more than 50 million, has been ruled by a military junta since 1962 during which time minority ethnic and religious groups have suffered persecution. One hundred and thirty five ethnic groups are in Myanmar, the Burman being the largest group with 68 percent of the population. The country is 87 percent Buddhist with a six percent Christian population.

Among the more serious conflicts is that between government forces and the Karen National Liberation Army. KNLA, based in Karen State, has been fighting for an independent homeland, with an escalation in the fighting in recent times. Myanmar forces captured and occupied several KNLA bases on April 10.

The fighting has affected refugees in Mae La camp, the base for Rev. Simon, the Kawthoolei School, and his ministry among the refugees. “Refugees in the Mae La camp in Tak Province (in Thailand) fear that junta and splinter group soldiers will attack the camp. Some have already begun packing their belongings,” Relief Web said on its website.

Myanmar army shell fire is reported to have hit Thailand, close to some of the refugee camps.

Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College offers general education to refugees and training to church leaders. Originally located in Rangoon, the country’s former capital, until 1988 when the school was destroyed, Simon and his family fled across the Thai border and restarted the school again at the Mae La camp, one of the largest refugee camps housing approximately 50,000 displaced persons who fled the conflicts in Myanmar. It restarted with 32 students and has since grown in enrollment to more than 300.
BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz has appealed to Baptists worldwide to pray for those living in the refugee camps. “They are under constant threat and many of our brothers and sisters are living in fear every night of being attacked. We call upon the government of Burma to halt these attacks and request the Thai government to assure the safety of these refugees. There are more than 100,000 refugees living on the border area of Thailand. A significant number of them are Baptists. They need our prayers and support.”

In the last ten years, more than 240 Baptist churches have been established in the refugee camps, the majority among the Karen.

Many of our brothers and sisters are living in fear every night of being attacked.

Simon and his family fled across the border and restarted the school at the Mae La camp, one of the largest refugee camps housing approximately 50,000 displaced persons who fled the conflicts in Myanmar.
The Women’s Department of the Baptist World Alliance took a team of four to the Mae La Refugee Camp in Northern Thailand on Sunday, April 29. The team included Chiyo Murakami, President of the Asian Baptist Women’s Union, Lorraine Walker, President of the Baptist Women’s Union of the South West Pacific, John Walker, Pastor, and me.

The purpose of the trip was to encourage the women living in the Mae La Camp, one of seven found along the border of Thailand and Myanmar. An estimated 150,000 Burmese refugees, largely from the Karen ethnic group, live in these camps. There are approximately 50,000 that live in Mae La and a large majority of these are women.

On the day before we visited the camp, our team prepared 200 gift bags with twelve items especially for women. It was an adventure buying the items in Chiang Mai and assembling the bags. Everyone on the team, including our team’s travel guide, worked late into the night to put together the gift bags. One of the items in the bag was a greeting card with messages of encouragement from Baptist women around the world. The cards were a means by which we let the women at Mae La know that they are not alone, but have Baptist sisters who remember them and pray for them.

Our team arrived in Mae La at 7 a.m. for the first worship service which was led by the women. Each team member had an opportunity to share words of encouragement from the Bible and from women in their specific area of work. Between each presentation a different choir sang. There was an adult women’s choir, a young women’s choir, two women
missionaries from the Philippines who sang a duet, a men’s choir and others. The men’s choir was made up of eleven men who are all blind, and some have other disabilities, due to injuries from land mines. The men, who are all Christians, sang like angels.

Immediately following the first service there was a baptismal service where five young people were baptized. Our team’s guide, who is Buddhist, was observing the service and gave our gift bags to the women leaders. We were also able to talk with women who shared their testimonies and told us about God’s protection as they made dangerous trips to Mae La from Myanmar. We had an opportunity to visit with Dr. Saw Simon in his home and learned about the Baptist work in Mae La and how God is preparing young people to share their faith and help make a world of difference. Dr. Simon was the recipient of the BWA Human Rights Award in 2000 for his work at the camp and he proudly displays his award plaque in his home, as well as his BWA Associate membership certificate for the seminary he leads.

It means a lot to these Baptist brothers and sisters in Mae La to be a part of the larger Baptist family.

Bottom right: The Team: (from left) Claudia Sherer and Chiyo Murakami of Japan, Patsy Davis, BWA Women’s Department director, Lorraine and John Walker of Australia.

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Dr. Simon received the BWA Human Rights Award in 2000 for his work at the camp.

The blind men’s choir sang like angels.

Our team arrived in Mae La at 7 a.m. for the first worship service which was led by the women.
The Asian Development Conference brought together people involved in relief and development work from conventions and unions in most of the 20 countries of the Asian Baptist Federation (ABF). The conference was co-sponsored by Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance.

One of two pre-conferences held before the ABF congress, the meetings ran April 30 to May 2 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, with the presentation of over 60 papers of varying lengths and subjects. The conference focused on development work in such countries as the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, and Cambodia. Topics covered included HIV/AIDS, disabilities, and disaster relief.

Much attention was given to the establishment of a Baptist aid agency for Asia, as discussions centered on accountability and transparency, gender sensitivity, as well as the missional nature of such an agency. Another major topic of discussion was on ‘Best Practices in Development’ in areas as diverse as agriculture and poverty reduction, relief and development, and the use of community-based organizations.

In stating the rationale for Christians to be engaged in development work, Julian Doorey of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society said, “The great mission outreach of the 19th and 20th century planted churches around the world. It was less successful, however, in transforming the societies in which people lived.” Doorey noted that “Poverty, injustice, corruption, violence and oppression continue unchecked in much of the world, despite the growth of the church.” He thus described church history as “A mixed bag of good and bad deeds.”

A presentation on HIV/AIDS by Banner Makan of India indicated that in 2005, 8.5 million people were living with the virus in Asia, with over one million newly infected in that year alone. Some countries, such as Pakistan, have shown alarming increases in the rate of infection due to intravenous drug use in cities such as Karachi. But other countries, including India and Thailand, suggest stabilization and even reduction in the rates of infection. Addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Asia will not be easy, as “Prevention messages will have to both acknowledge and challenge cultural mores which often prevent frank discussion of issues surrounding sex and drug use,” Makan said.

Kansinee Jirakun, a Karen nurse, said that in Northern Thailand, where several tribes live, AIDS is labeled as “A sin problem” rather than as a public health concern. Christians, she said, need to be challenged to respond with compassion rather than discrimination, condemnation or isolation, and she encouraged churches to hold seminars on sexuality.

Cambodia has one of the highest rates of disability in the world, the result of years of conflict and upheaval. There are almost 50,000 landmine amputees in the country of 15 million, and the healthcare and medical services sector proves inadequate to deal with this and other health problems. The situation is made worse by a high 39 percent of the population that lives in poverty. According to Fiona Morgan, “Poverty-related illness and disability is widespread.”

There is a great need for the church to change its approach and attitude to the disabled, Morgan insisted. “Many people with disabilities say that even when they have been able to physically enter and be part of a church, they are still not really included in the church community,” she said.

Other papers presented at the development conference focused on lessons learned from the December 2004 tsunamis, as well as on ‘child focused development,’ and other topics.
As far as Baptists in Asia go, India is a giant. With approximately 2.5 million baptized believers, the vast country has more than twice the number of Baptists than the next Asian country in line, Myanmar, which has 1.1 million members.

But, as India has a massive population of more than one billion people, second only to China in size, the figure of 2.5 million Baptists is miniscule. Baptist and other Christian denominations struggle to take root in the largely Hindu country, as well as among significant Muslim populations.

Yet, if one were to go to North East India, the part of the country that borders countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Pakistan, one is struck by a relatively strong Christian, and, in particular, Baptist, presence.

Called the ‘chicken neck’ due to its crooked shape and location in India’s top right corner, North East India is, in many ways, vastly different from the rest of the country. The North East has a strong genetic similarity with the peoples of East Asia, which makes them ethnic and cultural cousins of people of Mongol ancestry more than their fellow Indian citizens. Politically, the region is at the periphery of power in the world’s largest democracy; and economically, it has benefited least from the surging growth of the Indian economy.

The region’s incorporation into India was done by political fiat. The states that make up the territory were incorporated into mainstream India during the British Raj (the British rule between 1858 and 1947 of the Indian Subcontinent that included present-day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh), when British colonial authorities annexed traditionally separate border countries into Indian territory to form a buffer between their colony and external powers.

It is in North East states such as Mizoram, Nagaland, and Manipur, that one finds significant Baptist presence. Among the groups is the Evangelical Baptist Convention (EBC) in Manipur. Formed in 1948 after the first church was founded in Manipur in 1910, the EBC now has 137 churches with a membership close to 50,000.

(Continued on next page)
The EBC is a significant presence for a number of reasons. It is, according to Mission Director S. Vung Minthang, the one major organization that steps into the breach in areas where the government fails to deliver. With a staff of 280, the EBC does everything from running schools, providing money and seeds to farmers, to offering relief from the effects of poverty and insurgency.

Among the convention’s major successes (and challenges) is the running of its 58 schools. Even though the Indian government has a policy of universal education, it, in reality, fails to deliver in Manipur. “Teachers do not want to go to the deep rural areas” that characterize Manipur, Minthang explained. As a result, “Villagers do not trust the quality of the government schools, so they turn to the church-run schools,” the mission director elaborated. The proliferation of schools run by the church organization is due to the need to cater to those students who graduate from one school level and do not have acceptable education provided by the government at the next level.

Insurgency poses a special problem in the North East. Unrest is ever present as factions agitate and fight for political independence for their territory. Matters are made worse by tribal conflicts, such as that between the Zomis and Kukis over the past 10 years, which is essentially a fight over land. It is here, again, that the EBC steps into the breach. Orphaned children, widowed mothers, and displaced persons receive assistance from the EBC.

There is a unique form of famine, called the ‘Mautam famine,’ caused by flowering bamboos that occur every 40 years, that is affecting Manipur. The flowering causes the bamboo to die, which in turn prevents farmers from preparing the land for farming, a preparation that is done by burning the bamboo plants.

The situation is made worse by rat infestation. As rats feed on the flowering bamboo, the rat population increases dramatically. These rats in turn attack rice, maize, potato and other farm crops. Worse, the rats have become resistant to government pest control chemicals. Assistance is offered by EBC to farmers of up to 2,000 rupees (US$50) to address these and other farming problems.

“The church is the only organization they can turn to,” Minthang said, in reference to the several social and other problems residents of North East India face. It helps that in the northeastern territories, the Christian faith enjoys a measure of freedom it does not enjoy elsewhere in the country. “Tribes tend to live in the hills away from the cities, and have their own identity,” which includes a Christian identity, said Minthang. “Those who live among Hindus have problems. In Central India, tribal Christians lose status and benefits from the government. This does not occur in North East India,” he said.
I recently heard a good leader described as “Someone who dispenses hope.”

Many things will be said about the global ministry of Denton Lotz who retires as General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance at the end of this year. Included in any assessment of his gifts will be his brilliant mind with its length and depth of information on church and political history, theology, language skills and, yes, the name of every Baptist leader he ever met!

All of these helped him to be a stellar representative of Baptists to religious and political leaders everywhere, with whom he could converse about any subject. This was especially true when it came to the religious environment in which Baptists are, regardless of country.

These qualities were undergirded by his love for God’s authoritative Word and a respect for “A holy lifestyle” impressed on him from his years as a missionary in Communist Europe.

However, I believe that the sum of all of these attributes is the legacy of hope that Denton gave to Baptists around the world in his 27 years of service through the BWA. He began in 1980 as Director for Evangelism and Education and for Youth until 1988 when he was asked to serve as General Secretary when Dr. Gerhard Claas of Germany was killed in an automobile accident.

It was “For such a time like this,” that Denton stepped into this position. He quickly impressed the BWA governing
Tributes to

Denton Lotz from Our Baptist Family

STRONG LEADERSHIP AND PERSONAL FAITH

Dear Denton,

The Lord raised you up for such a time as we have been through. Your strong leadership and personal faith has been an inspiration and blessing to me.

The fact that we are related through marriage, that you are a member of our board of directors, and because of my longtime association with the Baptist World Alliance – all gives me a special reason to honor you on the occasion of your retirement.

Not only will the BWA miss you, but your ecumenical leadership will be missed throughout the world church.

Ruth and I wish you and Janice a wonderful future as you continue to minister the Gospel.

With warmest Christian greetings.

Billy Graham

body, the General Council, of his ability and never stopped growing as a leader from that point. He began a life-long pursuit to know as many Baptist groups around the world as he possibly could.

Much has been said about his globetrotting ways, but, when examined closely, one sees that Denton did not crisscross the world so many times because of the comfort of the planes or the international cuisine. It was a cost for him to leave his family and his Thursday early morning men’s Bible class at Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, which he enjoyed so much.

In whatever country he arrived, he was welcomed as someone who brought hope to Baptists wherever they were and in whatever situation they found themselves. There was never a time I traveled with him as part of a BWA team that I did not see him received with great joy. He was embraced as the leader who encouraged Baptists in their work and witness and Baptist identity. He was the symbol of their
belonging to a wider Baptist family that cared for them, whether they were 100 or 100,000 strong.

Denton constantly encouraged Baptist leaders who struggled with poverty and persecution, dissension and tensions with majority religions, or who were just plain tired. He felt their suffering and the hours are too many to count that he spent listening to their concerns. He celebrated with them, especially when they shared news of church growth or a new social outreach. He especially tried to join Baptists as they celebrated important milestones in their history.

(Continued on next page)
SCHOLARLY AND PASTORAL

I have been privileged to know Denton for 21 years, since 1986, when he was Director of the BWA Youth Department. I have also been privileged to work with him and travel with him on several occasions. Denton is an amazing person. He is at the same time scholarly as well as pastoral. He has been a good friend.

I am always amazed at his memory – the number of illustrations and stories he can quote, or the names or characteristics of people he can remember. He brings this to bear on situations in Baptist conventions around the world. His prophetic concern for reconciliation and freedom of religious practice has been one of his trademarks. To this end, he has been a good spokesman for the Baptist family worldwide to governments, as well leaders of other faiths and denominations, especially in Asia!

His other trademark has been ‘Window on the world’, in which he highlights various groups and ministries in different parts of the world. This is reflective of his work in introducing the Baptist family to important issues as well as lesser known heroes of faith in our Baptist family.

I have also been impressed with his discipline – both the devotional as well as the physical daily walks! And so with Paul, the apostle, I believe Denton can say with confidence, “Follow my example as I have followed that of Christ!”

Thank you Denton for your leadership!

Bonny Resu
General Secretary
Asia Pacific Baptist Federation

On the behalf of the six regions of Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and North America

He was a pastor who strengthened them in the Lord and gave good advice based on years of experience. He was always interested to know about their families and enjoyed talking about his. He was always concerned about their theological education and the need for it among Baptist leaders with few resources. He was an advocate for seminary training that understood the needs of the people and their cultural context without the neglect of the traditional theologians whose work must be studied.

I submit that the BWA membership rolls swelled because Denton cared so much about all of the Baptist groups he met, whether or not they were already a part of the BWA. He never hesitated to tell non-BWA members of the benefits to them if they joined this worldwide fellowship and especially that, whatever their missionary alliances, they had an equal voice in the BWA.

Denton was a bearer of hope for religious freedom and human rights. When the religious rights of any Baptist group were violated, however small these groups were, he was never afraid to speak to their government leaders about the situation. He would also appeal for help to the United States and other governments and then write about it so the world would know and join the protest. He gave their concerns the visibility they might have lacked.

(Continued on next page)
Legacy of Hope

1953-1956  Northport High School, New York

1956-1961  Bachelor of Arts from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

1961-1963  Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corp

Denton opens 'Windows on the World' of church life around the globe with his interviews of world Christian leaders.

The teen years

Second Lieutenant Lotz, 1961
Tributes

MISSIONARY THEOLOGIAN

I first met Denton Lotz in 1988 at the BWA Glasgow Youth Conference when my first and abiding impression of Denton was a man abounding in hope. I soon realized this was more than a natural spirit of optimism – it was the mark of a man grounded in the hope of Jesus Christ and his gospel. This has been the secret of Denton’s ministry through the years – he is a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ.

It has been an immense privilege to serve alongside our richly gifted General Secretary for the past nineteen years and I owe to him a personal debt for mentoring and encouraging me in my service to the BWA and my wider global ministry.

He leaves a massive footprint in the history of the BWA. He has been a missionary theologian, an inspiring preacher and evangelist, a champion for religious liberty, a Baptist ambassador, a Christian statesman, and a brother unrivalled in his prodigious remembering of the names of hundreds of people and places.

In all his gifted service Denton has been supported ably and loyally by his wife Janice. Many years ago as a young married couple, Denton and Janice dedicated their lives to the Lord in the spirit of Acts 20:24. They considered their personal ambitions secondary to “Completing the task the Lord Jesus had given them.” They have accomplished this task with an amazing fruitfulness and we praise the Lord for his gift of the Lotz family and assure them of our prayers for their future life and service.

David Coffey
President of the Baptist World Alliance

without his courageous and persistent voice.

Across Asia and the newly freed Euro-Asiatic countries, Denton fought for Baptists who suffered under the rule of religious majority churches that believed they were the true religion of this or that country.

Biblical justice was never far from his heart and lips and the words of the prophet Amos, “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream” (Amos 5:24) was his mantra throughout the years.

Especially noteworthy were his contributions in the area of racial justice in the United States and around the world. The BWA Harare Declaration on Racial Justice and other such declarations testify to this.

Denton could never completely rejoice when others suffered. I cannot remember a Christmas editorial that did not speak about Herod’s slaughter of the children in his attempt to kill the baby Jesus and the theme of the prophet Jeremiah’s lament of “Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted.” He always ended with the hope there is in Jesus Christ.

When the Berlin Wall fell, and subsequently the Communist Empire, Denton celebrated without his courageous and persistent voice.

Thanks Lotz!
1963-1966 Bachelor of Sacred Theology from Harvard Divinity School where he served as President of the Student Government from 1965-1966

1966 Ordained at Binkley Memorial Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

1966-1970 Doctor of Theology from the University of Hamburg, Germany

the hopes realized of so many who had suffered so much, in places such as Bulgaria and the former Soviet Union. He rejoiced as a former missionary to Eastern Europe who had experienced the challenges of doing spiritual work for people under atheistic and totalitarian rule. Likewise, in South Africa when apartheid fell, and in Liberia at the end of a terrible civil conflict, Denton was there to both rejoice and put in context what had occurred.

(Continued on next page)
COURAGEOUS ADVOCATE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The first time I met Dr. Denton Lotz was in Geneva in 1995. He was chairing the Conference of Secretaries of the Christian World Communions. I was impressed by his natural authority. It was also during these annual meetings that I discovered his strong convictions and his way of sharing what he believed while maintaining friendly relations with all in spite of spirited discussions.

Denton is also a courageous advocate of religious freedom. I remember him in Bucharest during the International Conference which gathered a hundred religious leaders from all around the world. He was invited to speak on the public square in front of official dignitaries and citizens of Bucharest. His message was strong and he took a few minutes to explain to everyone his understanding that Jesus Christ was the heart of his life and his mission. He was the only one who underlined the importance of freedom of religion and church-state separation. Being popular was not a concern for Denton, because his first priority was to be true.

I was really very pleased when the International Religious Liberty Association voted him as President. The tradition of rotating presidents every two years was broken with Denton. He was elected and reelected four times, and he chaired two World Congresses—Manila in 2002 and Cape Town in 2007.

Thank you, dear Denton, for your convictions, for your intelligent way of expressing your faith and the values in which you believe without destroying bridges between yourself and others. We will miss you, but we know that God, whom you and your wife have served with love during all your life, will give both of you many years to glorify Him in preaching His good news in ways He has yet to reveal to you.

Thank you for your friendship and for your support.

John Graz
Secretary General,
International Religious Liberty Association
everyone in his meetings, and because of the close family connection that exists. Denton spoke often of the Billy Graham meeting in Budapest, Hungary, in 1989, and the watershed event it was in a Communist country.

Above all else, the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was on his lips and was the expression of his heart. He preached the Gospel everywhere and saw many people accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as a result. Whatever the topic, it was to evangelism he always returned.

All of the topics on which I have briefly touched, and so many more, were powerfully expressed in his writing. He wrote numerous speeches, lectures and articles, but his column, ‘From the General Secretary’ in the monthly news bulletin, BWA News, was the most widely read of anything.

(Continued on next page)
Tributes

GIFTED LEADERSHIP

To Denton and Janice:

It is a great pleasure to commend both of you on your two decades of service to the Baptist World Alliance and to congratulate you both on your so-called ‘retirement.’

As I think of all that the BWA has accomplished for Baptists around the world in the past twenty years, I know that your gifted leadership has helped to make it all possible. I have enjoyed meeting with you to work on issues of concern to all of us.

You have served a great organization with conviction and honor. You have worked with other Christians around the world on issues of poverty, oppression, religious freedom, and human rights. You have led Baptists to be united, to support and uphold each other, and to spread the gospel of peace. I am especially grateful to the BWA in these times of religious division and dissension.

Denton, you have been faithful in supporting those things all Baptists have held dear for centuries. I have no doubt that your ‘retirement’ may look a little like mine – and I have never been busier!

God bless you and your family in these new and exciting times.

Jimmy Carter

produced in the BWA, and BWA leaders eagerly looked toward reading it, even if they argued with his thesis. The topics and instruction and discourse in those writings will, hopefully, one day be published in book form.

A good leader picks capable people and in this Denton’s choices were almost always the best. Under his leadership the BWA team, especially the directors, was strong and capable and he was never shy in his praise of us. “I could send any one of you anywhere and know you would represent the BWA very well,” he would tell us. I was proud to be a part of his team.

Much more will be written about his legacy and Baptist historians will analyze, discuss and evaluate in a much more scholarly way than this article. They will have an incredible volume of material with which to work.

My conclusion is this. The thread that will link all Denton did for Baptists wherever he met them was his ministry of hope that, in Jesus Christ, Baptists could fellowship together, work together, support each other, and, together, win the world for Jesus Christ, our Living Hope!

Wendy Ryan is the former Communications Director of the Baptist World Alliance
1970-1980

Missionary, International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches, USA. Representative to Central and Eastern Europe with frequent travels to USSR, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and German Democratic Republic, lecturing, preaching, and serving as a diplomatic representative to communist government officials on questions of religious freedom and Baptist life.

Preaching in Bucharest, Romania, 1974

Olusegun Obasanjo.

With President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya
Tributes

TREMENDOUS GIFT FOR RELATING TO PEOPLE

Dear Denton,

Some of us have worked with you for many years and some for only a few months. However, all of us have come to love and respect you as a person and as a world leader of Baptists. Your commitment to BWA is unquestioned and your willingness to sacrifice personally for the sake of the organization is an example and inspiration to all of us.

You are tireless, sincere, ethical, persevering and always hopeful. You have a tremendous gift for relating to all people with grace, tolerance and compassion. Your ability to remember names and faces, conversations and situations is remarkable. It has been both a blessing and a curse, because you also remember everything we have ever said or done!

Someone has said that if he were to describe you in one word it would be loyal. As a leader you have been loyal to BWA and as a boss you have been loyal to your staff. You have also been a true friend to us as you and Janice have welcomed us so warmly into your home and your hearts.

We have always felt that you cared about us individually as well as collectively. On countless occasions you have demonstrated your concern for our welfare and that of our families. We have always felt that we could come to you in difficult situations and be treated fairly and with respect.

As you leave BWA you leave a lasting legacy. May God richly bless you as He opens new “Windows on the World” in your life and ministry.

BWA Staff

With former U.S. President Bill Clinton

Meeting with late Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafic Hariri

With President the Philippines

With Tony Blair, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and his wife
1973-1980  Associate Professor of Missions and Homiletics at the Baptist Theological Seminary, Rüschlikon, Switzerland where he founded the Summer Institute of Theological Education (SITE), a short term, intensive theological program for Eastern European pastors and leaders.

The Lotzes at home in Rüschlikon, Switzerland with the faculty of the Baptist Theological Seminary.
Tributes to
Denton Lotz from Christian World Communions

FRANK CLARITY FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

For nearly twenty years, Denton and I have met at least annually in the meetings of General Secretaries of Christian World Communions. After the conclusion of the Baptist-Mennonite Theological Conversations (1989-1992), our exchanges were shaped by one of the recommendations of the final report of those conversations: “That the leaders and staff of the Baptist World Alliance and the Mennonite World Conference regularly seek each other’s advice and support on matters of mutual concern.”

What stands out in my mind about Denton is his frank clarity for the sake of the Gospel—always a forthright and plainspoken word for Christ, whatever the situation, whoever the company. Thank you, Denton, for exercising this gift in the global body of Christ. Don’t stop now!

Larry Miller
General Secretary
Mennonite World Conference
Strasbourg, France

Thanks Lotz!
1980
Elected associate secretary for the Baptist World Alliance with responsibilities for the Division of Evangelism and Education and Relief and Development; subsequently appointed director of the Youth Department.

1988-2007
BWA General Secretary
Tributes to Denton Lotz from Christian World Communions

“HE HAS BEEN BLESSED BY THE LORD WITH A BRILLIANT MIND”

It was a great privilege for me to have been associated with Dr. Denton Lotz during nine of the nearly twenty years that he served as General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance. I highly respected him for his great responsibility in providing international leadership to a fellowship of more than 200 Baptist conventions and unions with a membership of 36 million baptized believers worldwide.

In the annual meetings of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions, he clearly upheld and communicated the distinctive doctrines and missiology of his Baptist heritage. But at the same time he contributed significantly to the spirit of ecumenism amongst brothers and sisters in Christ baptized “By one Spirit into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13), the Church of Jesus Christ as a whole.

As successor to Colonel Earl Robinson, I came to this ecumenical appointment in June 2005, meeting with the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions in October 2005 and 2006. My brief association with Denton Lotz was sufficient to realize that here was a man who deserved respect for his godliness, integrity, courage, enthusiasm and warmth.

He has been blessed by the Lord with a brilliant mind and engaging personality. Undoubtedly his ministry will reach into the future and his influence for Christ and His Church will continue.

Commissioner Linda Bond
Salvation Army Secretary for International External Relations

BIBLICALLY-GROUNDED LEADERSHIP

We thank God for the leadership that our brother, Dr. Denton Lotz has provided the Baptist World Alliance and his contributions to the community of General Secretaries of Christian World Communions. Denton’s clear biblically-grounded leadership, mature faith and his depth of knowledge of different parts of the world have made it possible for him to be effective in his challenging ministry.

We will miss him at the annual meetings of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions. We pray for fulfillment and joy in a well-deserved time of relaxation in retirement.

On behalf of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches family, I wish Denton and his family all the best of God’s blessings.

Setri Nyomi
General Secretary
World Alliance of Reformed Churches

A MAN OF GREAT COURAGE

Denton is a man of great courage and conviction. Enthusiasm is a hallmark of his life and work. Denton is a man whose life is transparent for God. His confidence in his beliefs has vaulted him into positions of leadership throughout his ministry. Highly respected by his peers, Denton’s knowledge of Church history, especially the ecumenical movement, has given him friends for life around the world. I wish my colleague God’s blessings in the next chapter of his life and ministry.

George H. Freeman, General Secretary, World Methodist Council
New Zealand

On air during a Christian radio broadcast in Russia

Congress in Birmingham, England
My husband and I were returning home from a busy day of working and running errands when at about 3:00 pm on Monday, April 16, I received a call from my brother asking if a young friend of ours was okay. I was confused and asked, “What do you mean is she okay?” He asked if we had seen or heard the news about Virginia Tech, which we had not. I, like many others, was shocked and couldn’t quite comprehend what had happened.

I am a Licensed Professional Counselor and a volunteer Crisis Care Chaplain with the Virginia Baptist Mission Board (VBMB). Crisis Care Chaplaincy began several years ago in coordination with the Disaster Relief Ministry of the VBMB.

The Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) building is a couple of blocks away from the Drill Field at Virginia Tech University, and was flooded with about 300 students Monday night, the day of the events. Tragically, they found out that one of their own had not survived.

Every disaster or trauma is different and we never quite know what to expect. This was no exception. My primary focus and concern was for the BCM staff, Darrell Cook and Mark Appleton. They were overwhelmed and tired, but functioning as well as could be expected under the circumstances.

None of us can ever be prepared for something so heinous and unspeakable. It is always hard to say what our exact role will be when we are deployed, but this was especially true at VA Tech. Chaplains are mostly called in to help victims of natural disasters. I have personally worked with churches that have experienced traumatic death, but never on such a scale as this.

After a while, the students seemed to be getting back to their normal routine with about 90 percent of the student body returning to school a week after the incidents. This did not surprise me because it is important for survivors of trauma and loss to reconnect to help process what has happened and to try to bring some sense of closure.

I was able to get down to the Drill Field after one of the memorial services, held Monday, April 23. There are no words to describe how surreal it felt to be at the place where this horrible tragedy occurred. As I walked around the memorial boards and the Hokie (the school mascot) stone memorials, the students were doing just what they needed to do. They were rallying around one another and grieving together as a community.

About 60 students and adults attended the funeral of Brian Bluhm, the slain BCM student, and they were all sporting hats from his favorite baseball team, the Detroit Tigers.

Later in the week, I also met with the staff to assist them in processing their own experiences, to normalize what they were going through, and I offered information on how to identify students who might be at risk for developing serious problems such as depression or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

This tragedy was much different than the natural disasters I had been deployed to. The BCM students were safe physically, unlike victims of natural disaster who go through the continuing trauma of not having food, water, clothing or shelter. Although they were traumatized, they had the built-in support of their small groups.

It is amazing to see the hand of God in the midst of tragedy. He was there in the presence of Darrell and Mark and other adults who care. He was there in the calls, emails, and prayers by Baptists from all over the world. He was there in the students who cried, hugged, and prayed together. And, He was there as those same students offered understanding and forgiveness to the one who had caused all of this pain. There was no anger, only the need to try and make sense out of something so senseless and to allow God to lead them down the path of healing and recovery.
There is something wonderful about getting your hands dirty for Jesus. Very often I am on the clean end of an aid project. Part of my job with Baptist World Aid is to help with the paperwork that makes it possible for money to be wired to Baptist partners all over the world. Thus, it was fantastic to be ‘on the ground’ to take part in the first week of the Baptist Blitz Build, which was a joint venture by Habitat for Humanity of Greater Baton Rouge, Canadian Baptist Ministries and Baptist Builders, a partnership initiative between the American Baptist Churches in the USA, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Alliance of Baptists, the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, and Baptist World Aid.

The Baptists gathered together truly were the body of Christ, working as one organism to put together simple, decent places to live for deserving families. Some of the volunteers were highly skilled and were able to go right to work with little or no instruction. Some of us were novices who needed to be coached and frequently reminded of the details for the specific task we had been assigned. There were individuals who were able to lift massive amounts of weight to help raise the trusses to the roof while others had the patience to complete the most intricate of jobs.

Eight inches of rain the day before the May 5 dedication of Loretta Walker’s and Cecil and Beverly Gentry’s new Habitat for Humanity homes in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, may have delayed the completion of the construction, but it certainly did not dampen their excitement. Although the Baptist Builder sponsors and volunteers had to stand in the mud for the presentation of Bibles and keys to the houses, the only drops of water falling at the ceremony were the tears on everyone’s cheeks. As the Baptist World Alliance and other sponsors were acknowledged and a litany of dedication and prayer was spoken, the joy of finally having their own homes after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina was written all over the faces of the new homeowners.

Loretta Walker, a single mother, spoke at the dedication of God’s faithfulness. She said that having her own home was a “Dream come true thanks to the hundreds of wonderful Baptist volunteers that had helped her build her house.” Three weeks before Katrina stuck New Orleans Loretta had moved into her deceased father’s house in New Orleans. She thought she finally had a home of her own. But the
hurricane washed that dream away and seemingly made it impossible for Loretta to ever have a place she could call her own. Baptist Builders and Habitat for Humanity gave her back her dream. “Now I have something to leave to my children and my grandchildren,” Loretta said. “I took pictures of the house every day so that everyone can see the miracle God has done in my life.”

Cecil and Beverly Gentry were living in a truck after Katrina. They had been without a home since 2005. They both

said that they did not know that there were so many people “Who cared so much about people like us who don’t have much. We never lost our faith in God, but this has restored our faith in people.” Cecil, a truck driver by profession, was enthusiastic: “The house gives us a fresh start. Now we are going to try to have kids and we are going to spend the rest of our lives helping other people get a fresh start too.” Cecil and Beverly have already pledged a portion of their income and time to help build more Habitat for Humanity houses in the Baton Rouge area. Beverly said, “We have never felt so much love and we have never felt so blessed.”
Ruth Graham Has Died

Ruth Graham, wife of internationally renowned Baptist evangelist, Billy Graham, has died. She was 87 years old.

The daughter of American medical missionary parents, she was born in Qingjiang, China, on June 10, 1920, and later lived in Pyongyang, now capital of North Korea. She met her husband while they were students at Wheaton College in Illinois, and they were married in 1943.

The mother of five children founded the Ruth and Billy Graham Children’s Health Center in Asheville, North Carolina in 1966, as well as the Ruth Bell Graham International Children’s Health Fund, part of the Children’s Health Center. Founded in honor of her father, the fund assists in training doctors for overseas missions.

A prolific writer and a poet, her most noted work is Footprints of a Pilgrim, her life story told through poetry and prose.

Graham was a firm supporter of her husband’s ministry, giving the name, Hour of Decision, to the Billy Graham radio ministry that began in 1950. She traveled extensively with him during national crusades in the United States and internationally, going around the world with him twice, between 1977 and 1980.

Graham had a health crisis in 1974 after she suffered a 15-foot fall, leaving her in a coma for a week. She contracted bacterial spinal meningitis in 1996, partially caused by a treatment for degenerative arthritis resulting from the 1974 fall. Ailing for the past several years, she slipped into a coma early on Wednesday, June 13, and died the following day.

Denton Lotz, General Secretary for the Baptist World Alliance and a family member through his brother’s marriage to the Grahams’ daughter, Anne, expressed condolences on Ruth Graham’s passing.

“It was with great sorrow that we learned of the death of Ruth Graham. She was a spiritual giant, a beautiful Christian and a wonderful spiritual writer. To her children she was their best friend and pastor. Her essays, articles and books reveal a person who knew life at its deepest, with all its joys and sorrows. She was kind to everyone, whether with high officials or working people.

“I remember the first time I met her at my brother Danny’s and Anne Graham’s wedding. She had a sparkle in her eye and was so kind to everyone. Her simple lifestyle was rich in Christian tradition and steeped in Reformed theology that she learned from her Presbyterian father, Dr. Nelson Bell.

“Ruth Graham taught many people how to live with pain, even triumphantly! When you met her she was always smiling and encouraging. An avid reader, she knew and loved the world to which her husband had been called to minister as an evangelist of Christ. The world will miss her articles in Decision magazine, but Billy will miss her most of all. He wrote movingly during her last days, ‘Ruth is my soul mate and best friend, and I cannot imagine living a single day without her by my side. I am more in love with her today than when we first met over 65 years ago as students at Wheaton College.’”

In addition to her husband of 64 years, Graham leaves children Virginia Leftwich (GiGi), Anne, Ruth Bell (Bunny), William Franklin III, and Nelson Edman (Ned).

She was buried in the Prayer Garden at the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte, North Carolina in a private, family-only, interment service on June 17, following a public funeral service at Anderson Auditorium at the Montreat Conference Center in North Carolina, the day before. The library was dedicated on May 31.

Three former USA presidents, Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton attended.

The Grahams have been close friends of the BWA. Billy Graham spoke at every BWA World Congress between 1950 and 1985, and he continues to give moral support to the international organization that represents a community of 110 million people around the world.

Former Caribbean Leader Dies

Azariah McKenzie, the first Executive Secretary/Treasurer for the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF), and BWA Regional Secretary for the Caribbean, died on Saturday, April 21.

Prior to being BWA Regional Secretary, McKenzie served 19 years as General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU), 10 years as President of the CBF, and as a Vice President of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

Described as the architect of the modern JBU, McKenzie led the implementation of several projects and policies that changed and improved the operational efficiency of the union. A major accomplishment by McKenzie was his role in the passing of a law by the Parliament of Jamaica in 1969 incorporating the buildings and lands of most of the churches affiliated with the JBU under the union. This law made it impossible for churches or pastors to dispose of Baptist land or other property without the permission of the JBU, and thwarted any attempt to pull an existing church out of the Jamaican convention.

He also played a significant part in the formation of the United Theological College of the West Indies, the major institution of theological education and ministerial training in the English-speaking Caribbean.

McKenzie brought these organizational and administrative skills to the CBF when he retired from the Jamaican convention in

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1980 to give full time service to the regional body, one of six continental federations within the BWA. He, in effect, became the voice and face of Caribbean Baptists to the world.

BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz said, “Azariah McKenzie was a great Baptist World Alliance leader. As General Secretary of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, he served also as BWA Regional Secretary for the Caribbean. Not only was he an outstanding preacher, but a great missiologist. He understood the times in which we were living and exerted great influence on Baptist world leaders, anticipating the paradigm shift of Christianity from the North to the South.”

Neville Callam, nominated to succeed Lotz as BWA General Secretary, said of McKenzie, “He was a man who was given to hard work. He spared no energy in conducting research, in making detailed preparation for every assignment, in consulting with and engaging in deep and searching discussion with collaborators. He was a team person par excellence whose dependability and trustworthiness are legendary, and whose distaste for mediocrity and sloppiness was known to all persons who knew him.”

CBF president Burchell Taylor lauded the late Caribbean leader. “The passing of the Rev. Azariah McKenzie marks the end of an era of unparalleled Christian leadership and service to the regional Baptist movement of the Caribbean. He will be greatly missed by all.”

Peter Pinder, who succeeded McKenzie as Caribbean Regional Secretary in 1995, said, “As successor to Rev. Azariah McKenzie in the office of Executive Secretary/Treasurer, I am keenly aware of the tremendous contribution of this giant among Baptists in our region in the shaping of Baptist life. He led in laying the foundation and in the development of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship while serving as its first president, an office he held for ten years. We are all standing on his shoulders.”

In active ministry for more than 40 years prior to his retirement from the CBF and the BWA in 1995, the Jamaican held degrees from Yale Divinity School in the United States and Leeds University in England, in addition to studies at Calabar Theological College in Jamaica, the British-American Baptist Foreign Mission Society as the Christian Service Society in 1836 in Balasore, another city in Orissa state.

The East Indian group, a member body of the Baptist World Alliance, has 95 affiliated churches with total membership over 45,000.

Kumar Sen was buried on Wednesday, April 4, in Balasore, his hometown. He leaves his wife and a son.

India Leader Dies

Sailendra Kumar Sen, former president of Bengal-Orissa-Bihar Baptist Churches Association (BOBBCA) in India, died on Tuesday, April 3.

Samaresh Nayak, acting General Secretary of BOBBCA, reported that Kumar Sen was in a traffic accident after suffering a massive heart attack while driving his car on March 13. He died after spending three weeks in Kalinga Hospital in Bhubaneswar, a city of over one million located on the eastern coast of India and the capital of Orissa state.

Paul Montacute, Director of Baptist World Aid, in expressing condolences, said, “It has been a privilege to work with BOBBCA in recent years, and so we feel the loss of a Brother in Christ.” Kumar Sen was a member of the BW Aid committee at the time of his passing.

Benjamin Chan, area director of East Asia and India for American Baptist International Ministries, said, “I will never forget his genuine heart for the Lord, his caring smile, and the wisdom he put forth in times of crisis.”

Kumar Sen was a founding member of BOBBCA, formed in March 1999. The organization was originally founded by the

Brazilian Baptist Mission Leader Dies

Waldemiro Tymchak, Executive Director of the World Mission Board of the Brazilian Baptist Convention (BBC) since 1979, died on April 20.

Under his leadership, Brazilian Baptists’ mission ministry around the world experienced tremendous growth. Today over 600 missionaries from Brazil are
Sixty seven Baptist theologians, leaders and pastors from around the world gathered at a Baptist World Alliance Symposium held March 21–24, at the German Baptist Seminary in Elstal (Berlin).

Called to discuss Baptist ecclesiology (the theology of the church), the symposium focused on the autonomy of the local church, primarily the relationship of the local church to the larger Baptist community of associations, national conventions and unions, regional fellowships, and the BWA.

The following is the Statement from the symposium.

**Are Baptist Churches Autonomous?**

**WE AFFIRM**

1. That Christ is in the midst of His church as its Lord. As the head of the church He empowers and equips it for holistic mission and ministry, and grants it its freedom.

2. That for Baptists, the local church is wholly church but not the whole church.

3. That our local churches and Conventions/Unions are participants in the one church that God has called into being as we anticipate the full revelation of the children of God.

4. That historically, Baptists have affirmed the theological and practical necessity of relating to sister churches for discernment and action. They often expressed this interconnectedness through the notion of Covenant expressed by the early English Baptist phrase, ‘to walk together in ways known and to be made known.’

5. That many wider Baptist structures such as Unions and Conventions first came into being because of a shared concern for mission and the alleviation of human need. They were also formed as expressions of ‘koinonia’ between the churches and out of a concern for unity - to ‘be one, that the world might believe’. We reaffirm the relevance of these foundations for our current life together.

**WE HAVE DISCUSSED**

1. Whether ‘autonomy’ is a biblical concept.

2. Different Baptist ecclesiologies and their expressions and recognized these may have taken different forms in different cultures, social contexts and political realities.

3. Whether structures beyond the local church have an ecclesial function.

4. The nature of the power and authority in local churches and wider Baptist structures and what the boundaries of belonging are.

5. Current movements which are impacting Baptist life in some parts of the world e.g. such radically different examples such as the ‘Emerging church’ and the G12.

**WE SUGGEST FOR CONSIDERATION**

That the BWA convene an international group of theologians, pastors and denominational leaders to produce a discussion paper about the ecclesial significance of structures beyond the local church. This paper would be used as a basis for discussion and action in the regions, conventions and at work in 63 countries. In addition, 160 Brazilian Baptist youth, known as “Radicals” or “Volunteers without Borders,” are engaged in short-term missionary work in Africa and Latin America.

Tymchak was actively involved in the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). He was one of the BBC’s delegates on the BWA General Council. He also served as Director of Mission for the Union of Baptists in Latin America (UBLA), a regional body of the BWA, since 2004. At the BWA’s Annual Gathering in Mexico City in July 2006, Tymchak was a panelist for the forum, ‘Improving short-term missions.’

Fausto Vasconcelos, BWA’s Director of Evangelism and Education, and former president of the BBC, describes Tymchak as “One of the best loved and most respected Brazilian Baptist leaders ever in the history of the Brazilian Baptist Convention.”

In his commendation of Tymchak, BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz said, “Waldemiro Tymchak was a great Brazilian Baptist mission leader. His innovation in preparing Brazilian Baptists to be a missionary people will never be forgotten. He was a pioneer in involving young people, particularly in his support of the Radical mission project for youth.

“The BWA will miss Waldemiro who was very involved in the BWA International Mission Secretaries meetings. His enthusiasm and encouragement for Baptists to continue to be involved in world evangelization struck a chord with Baptist mission leaders. Waldemiro’s support of the BWA and his world vision has always been a great encouragement to us. The BWA joins Brazilian Baptists in sending our sympathy and prayers to his wife and family.”

Tymchak is survived by his wife, Acidalia, and his two adult children, Nelson and Tais.

(Continued on next page)
unions, theological institutions, associations, international structures and the local churches.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Is there a common Baptist theological understanding of the church which includes the necessity of co-operation and koinonia beyond its own reality?

2. What may Baptists learn from the ecclesiologies of similar churches e.g., Mennonites, Anabaptists, the Emerging church, Congregationalists and Pentecostals?

3. What are the dangers involved in misunderstanding the concept of autonomy?

4. How may personal, collegial, and communal patterns of spiritual oversight be probed for a proper theological and biblical understanding of each?

5. How do Baptists handle diversity and discipline beyond the local church, in Conventions/Unions, Regional Fellowships or the BWA?

6. How may the Baptist churches discern new ways in which the Spirit is at work in the world in bringing believers together and so discover new ways to order our common life to embrace what the Spirit is doing?

Papers presented at the symposium and the statement in other languages can be viewed at www.bwanet.org.

BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz with General Secretary Nominee Neville Callam (center) and Ian Randall of IBTS in Prague, Czech Republic (right), at the conference in Elstal.

In Memory Of

Cindy Lee Edge in memory of Roy Gene Edge
William K. Johnson in memory of Susan Johnson
Colleen Leidy in memory of Alexander Haunold

In Honor Of

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Taylor in honor of Robert McQuade

Gifts to the Baptist World Alliance William J. Cumbie Emerging Leaders Fund, in memory of William J. Cumbie, were given by:

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The Bird Watchers (Larry, Roland, GT and FW) of the Backlick Association
Helen and Nancy Treis
Margaret E. Triche
Colonel James Walsh
Mr. and Mrs. G. T. Ward
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Wiley
Harris H. Yeager from the Seeker Class, Westwood Baptist Church
Imagine if the government of your country did any of the following:

- Banned all worship services in church buildings less than 100 years old
- Demanded that all churches over 100 years old remove symbols of the cross
- Permitted Christians to hold meetings in their homes but banned any singing
- Outlawed translations of the Bible into indigenous languages
- Forced Christian women to become wives of government soldiers
- Demanded that you use the name ‘religious center’ rather than the word ‘church’
- Refused permission for repairs to be carried out on church buildings
- Described Christianity as the ‘C’ virus
- Closed Christian-run orphanages so that children were not infected with the ‘C’ virus
- Imprisoned pastors who raised money for Christian-run orphanages
- Published pamphlets which said “Attack Christians by any means – violent or non violent”
- Trained child soldiers (70,000) to commit acts of violence against your ethnic group
- Ignored the protests of those campaigning for human rights and religious liberty
- Brutally executed a human rights worker for campaigning for such liberty

The Baptists of Myanmar (Burma) do not have to imagine this scenario; this is their living experience in 2007. It was my privilege to meet many brothers and sisters from Myanmar during the meetings of the Asia Baptist Congress. The story of the Baptists of Myanmar is one of inspiring courage, fortitude and endurance. In 1960 there were 300,000 Baptists in Myanmar. During the succeeding years to 2007, a period of brutal repression where the government has suppressed all dissent, they have grown to be a family of over one million baptized believers. As one of their leaders remarked, “Through our crisis we have grown; through our challenges the church has prospered.”

The legendary missionary to Burma, Adoniram Judson (1788-1850), would understand this spirit. His famous saying may provide a memorable sound bite in 2007, “The future is as bright as the promises of God.” But there were times when Judson saw no bright light at the end of the tunnel – only greater darkness.

It was four years before Judson was able to hold a semi-public service in Burma

After 10 years the congregation of the church had grown to only 18

After 17 years of American Baptist Missions there were only 10 Burmese converts

He labored for 24 years to translate the Bible into the Burmese language

He was imprisoned during the Anglo Burmese war for 20 months and suspected of spying

He was suspended by his mangled feet with only head and shoulders touching the ground

But through the darkness of suffering, Judson lived to see the exceptional fruitfulness of his mission work, especially among the Karen people. The Karen people were once a turbulent tribal group. In 1828 only one Karen had been baptized. When Judson died in 1850 (the year that C.H. Spurgeon became a Baptist), the number of baptized believers among the Karens was on the way to the 1856 figure of 11,878, a figure that would keep rising for the next 150 years. (See the splendidly readable, A History of Christianity in Asia, by Samuel Hugh Moffett and the excellent monograph by William H. Brackney, The legacy of Adoniram Judson, International Bulletin of Mission Research, July 1998)

Samuel Moffett tells the story of a Karen deacon called Bassein Sgau Karen who lived some 50 years after the death of Judson. A community of hill tribe Karen Christians was starving. A plague of rats had destroyed their harvest. When some missionaries visited the tribal community they discovered that people had resorted to eating the rats to stay alive. As they were leaving the famine-stricken community, Bassein Sgau Karen presented the missionaries with a gift of ten rupees ($5) and asked that this should be donated toward the frontier mission pioneer work among the Ka-Khyen people. When the missionaries resisted taking the gift, insisting that the Karen community needed to spend its money on food, the Baptist deacon shook his head and said: “We can live on rats. The Ka-Khyen cannot live without the gospel.”

This is the spirit of Revelation 12:11. The overcomers are those who believe in the power of the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and who refuse to love their lives so much as to shrink from death. I see this spirit in the history of Burmese Baptists. I encounter it when I meet Baptists from Myanmar in 2007. It is the spirit that should inspire us all to lift our voices for the voiceless.

Lift Up Your Voices for the Voiceless

FROM THE PRESIDENT
David Coffey
We all have a desire for service and love. For many of us, servanthood comes through creating a spiritual legacy during our lives – something that reflects the faith by which we lived. A bequest is perhaps the easiest and most tangible way to show where our treasure was stored – and to do one more thing for Christ's Kingdom before we go home.

A bequest is a gift made through your will or trust. There are several ways to make a bequest:

- Specific dollar amount
- Percentage of your estate
- Specific asset
- Residue of your estate

For more information on how to create a BWA legacy through a bequest, please contact us or log on to our web site at www.bwagift.org. We look forward to helping you!