Praising God in Cuba

Caribbean Baptists Face Down Challenges - see page 18
Peter Pinder Demits Office

Peter Pinder, Baptist World Alliance regional secretary for the Caribbean and executive secretary/treasurer for the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF), demits office as of July 31, 2010. Pinder assumed both positions in 1995 following the retirement of Azariah McKenzie, the first person to be so elected.

The executive secretary/treasurer has day to day responsibilities for the CBF, one of six BWA regional fellowships, and represents the interests of Caribbean Baptists at the BWA level.

Pinder, in his last report at the CBF General Assembly in March 2010, recounted the challenges faced by Baptists in the Caribbean, including the relatively frequent occurrences of natural disasters such as hurricanes, and financial challenges faced by the smallest BWA regional body. But he also rejoiced in the many times Caribbean Baptists joined in worship and fellowship, such as at Caribbean Baptist Youth festivals and Caribbean Baptist Women’s conferences. He was pleased that he was able to share in a number of annual meetings of CBF member bodies.

“I have personally benefited from having served in this office, and I do hope that the lives of many in our region have been positively impacted as well,” Pinder said. “I am extremely grateful to those who have served with me in the CBF and to the member bodies for their confidence and support. I wish my successor in office God’s divine favor and blessings.”

The senior pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Freeport, Bahamas, since 1979, Pinder is a former vice president and executive secretary for the Zion United Baptist Convention in the Bahamas.

Pinder is to be succeeded by Everton Jackson, pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and a former president of the Jamaica Baptist Union.

COVER PHOTO
Cuban Baptists declared their hope in Cuba for Christ at a joyous and moving Living Water conference. The growth of Baptist churches throughout Cuba is testimony to the faith and dedication of our brothers and sisters in Christ on this island. Unless otherwise noted, photos in the issue are by BWA staff.
24 Britain Hosts Conference on Jamaican Slave Leader and Rebel

BWA representatives participated in a conference on the Jamaican slave rebel Samuel Sharpe. Sharpe was a Baptist Christian who led fellow slaves in a rebellion that ended in hanging, but hastened the end of slavery in the British colonies.

25 BWAid Director Visits Haiti

Paul Montacute visited Haiti to assess the damage from January’s earthquake and to meet with Haitian Baptists. Conditions remain desperate, with people toiling amidst devastation, trying to live just another day. Aid from the world’s Baptists continues, with plans including the construction of a school, orphanage and chapel complex.

27 Providing Earthquake Relief in Chile

Mario Ramos of Chile reports on the destruction from the earthquake that shook Chile in February, and describes the generous efforts of Baptist church members to help those who were affected.

28 BWA Deepens Ties with the UN

BWA Freedom and Justice director Raimundo Barreto wants to see Baptist voices play a more influential role in UN discussions concerning religious freedom and other human rights. The BWA’s large worldwide constituency adds weight to its UN representation, making its advocacy work more effective.

30 In Memoriam

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Caribbean Baptists Face Down Challenges

Baptist leaders in the Caribbean met to address issues of growth, leadership needs and the regional challenges of resources for diverse language and culture groups. The assembly, normally held every four years, met for worship, fellowship, study and decision making.

The African Roots of Caribbean and American Christianity

Stephen Jennings surveys the rich yet largely ignored history of African centric Christianity that migrated to the Americas with slavery and colonialism.
Baptists Help Overcome a Scandal

Baptist work started in Sweden in the 1840s and, in 1857, the first General Conference of the Baptist Union of Sweden (BUS) took place.

BUS was among the European unions represented at the inaugural BWA congress which was held in London, England, in 1905. Facing religious persecution at home, the Baptists desired to participate in the wider fellowship of Baptists which was just taking institutional form. The congress received a telegram with greetings from 3,000 Baptists gathered at Stockholm, in Sweden, conveying their “most heartfelt and brotherly greetings.”

From the early years, Swedish Baptists have exhibited concern for the unity of the church. In 1870, they considered uniting with the Independent/Free Lutherans, but the union did not materialize.

In the year when they participated in the inaugural BWA congress, BUS also partnered with the United Methodist Church in Sweden and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden in a historic conference. In this first “Free Church” Conference held in Stockholm, the three partners sought to draw nearer to each other for fellowship and closer cooperation.

By 1918, as a sign of their commitment to order their mutual relations in harmony, the three Free Church unions formed a Free Church Committee for Cooperation. At one time, the Committee discussed the idea of establishing a Free Church Federation. It also contemplated other forms of cooperation but, in the end, no consensus was achieved on which to build an edifice capable of manifesting visible church unity.

Meanwhile, the Swedish Baptist family itself experienced the pain of division. This resulted from a number of factors, including a tradition of not accommodating church congregations that did not comply fully with the doctrinal positions and church practices the BUS leaders believed were required of all Baptists associated in their union.

With the passage of time, the BUS has become increasingly aware of the scandal of disunity not only among Baptists, but also in the wider church community in Sweden. A report issued in 1965 by a committee established to consider possible BUS membership in the World Council of Churches (WCC) did not offer a positive recommendation on WCC membership. Nevertheless, the authors of the report did state that “every step which, in complete faithfulness to the Word of God, can be taken towards a gradual overcoming of Christian division … ought to be taken.”

In May 2010, significant steps were taken by the three church groups, which had their first meeting in 1905, to come closer to the unity they have been contemplating since at least the early 1900s. Earlier, the three partners had decided to accept a Declaration of Intention concerning the creation of a new joint church. Now in 2010, for the second time, the United Methodist Church in Sweden, the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden and the Baptist Union of Sweden held their annual church conference in a common venue, with significant joint evening celebrations.

In a session attended mostly by members of BUS churches, I had the opportunity to share with the gathering some perspectives on the formation of united churches. I made special reference to the United Church of North India (CNI) which was formed on Nov 29, 1970, by Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Disciples, Methodist, Brethren and Presbyterian churches. Coming as the fruit of a process which had its origins in the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, and given birth 23 years after the Church of South India (CSI) was formed in 1947, the CNI is of particular interest to Baptists. It is one of the relatively few church union schemes in which Baptists participated voluntarily. They were involved from the inception of the talks in 1929.

Drawing upon the papers and reports associated with the eight international consultations of United and Uniting Churches, I emphasized the importance of understanding the union being pursued rather as a conversion of identities than as a merger of administrative units. I also canvassed the importance of the partners keeping the focus on the mission they will carry out in the name of Christ, rather than concentrating too much of their energy on questions of administrative structure and concerns related to the distribution of power in the new church which is emerging.

Out of respect for the commitment to visible ecclesial unity that is partly responsible for the drive of the Swedish partner churches, I encouraged strong refusal to regard the united church that will come into being as the pioneer of a new denomination or a nucleus of a new Christian World Communion.

Currently before the churches is a draft constitution to which each of the groups is expected to send in written responses that will be discussed by the coordinating committee. The hope is that, in the near future, a new united church will come to full flower. Could such a church serve as another sign of the urgent need for us to remember the scandal of division in the one body of Christ?
The Union of Baptists in Latin America (UBLA), one of six regional fellowships of the Baptist World Alliance, held a consultation from April 14-18, 2010, in San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica. Baptist leaders from 25 countries in Central and South America attended the event.

The consultation was aimed at evaluating the situation of Baptists in Latin America, reflecting on the past decade, and putting strategic plans in place for the next 10 years.

UBLA reported significant numerical growth. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of Baptist churches in Latin America increased from a little more than 10,200 to more than 16,000 churches, while church membership grew from 1.4 million to more than 2.3 million. Growth among Baptists was reported to be four times that of the growth of the population in Latin America in the period between 2000 and 2010.

Raquel Contreras, a vice president of the BWA and former president of UBLA, made a presentation to the gathering on the devastating 8.8 magnitude earthquake that affected Chile on February 27. “God has changed our agenda…our way to see life has changed…our priorities have been changed,” she told the gathering of mainly Baptist convention and union presidents and general secretaries.

UBLA President Ivan Martinez described Latin America as a region characterized by both suffering and hope, which testify to the need for Baptists to engage in compassionate care for the Latin American people.

Among those attending the meetings were Raimundo Barreto, BWA Director for the Division of Freedom and Justice, and Daniel Carro, former BWA regional secretary for Latin America and a member of the BWA Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation and the Academic and Theological Education Workgroup.
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) has extended condolences to the people of Poland on the tragic plane crash that killed Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, Maria, and 94 other national leaders and officials, near the city of Smolensk in western Russia, on April 10.

General Secretary Neville Callam, in his letter to Baptists in Poland, expressed “deep regret” and stated that “the entire Baptist family from around the world grieves with the Polish people, and especially with our Baptist sisters and brothers, over your indescribable loss.”

The BWA leader assured Baptists in Poland of Baptist solidarity and divine support. “We stand in solidarity with you even as we are assured that the ever-present God waits to comfort and strengthen you all through the Holy Spirit.”

He stated his hope that, “even in the midst of such wrenching tragedy and loss, the love of God through Christ, and the peace that passes all understanding, will engender hope for a bright future for all the people of Poland, even though the present seems so dark.”

Condolesences were also sent to the Central European country by Baptists in Europe. Tony Peck, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, wrote to Donald Tusk, prime minister of Poland, “We have been shocked and deeply saddened by the news of the plane crash. We know this is a major tragedy for the whole Polish nation and we mourn with you the loss of so many outstanding leaders.”

“God’s Word calls on us Christians to empathize and be compassionate towards one another, for ‘if one part suffers, every part suffers with it,’” Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists president, Alexey Smirnov, wrote to Gustaw Cieslar, president of the Baptist Union of Poland.

He assured Polish Baptists that Russian congregations were praying that the deep wounds of Polish sisters and brothers would be healed, their spirits strengthened, and that they would be given the power to cast all of their suffering onto Christ following the irreplaceable loss.

Hartmut Riemenschneider, president, and Regina Claas, general secretary of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, expressed sympathies to Baptists in Poland. It was “with great shock that we received the news of the tremendous tragedy that has befallen your country,” they said to Cieslar.

“We pray that the Lord of all comfort will be with those most immediately affected.” The Germans prayed that God “will raise up leaders who can fill the void,” and that Baptists in Poland will testify to “the hope founded in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.”
Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance, has sponsored a Food for Work Program undertaken by the Cambodia Baptist Union (CBU). Among the ventures to be undertaken through the program are the building of wells, ponds and canals, as well as road building and repair.

The program, begun in March 2010, aims to put destitute persons to work on capital and infrastructural projects in exchange for food aid. Work started in two villages, Sampov Meas village and Brasat village. The two pilot projects were headed by pastors Em Von and Joy Kong, who work as community organizers. Both were trained to supervise the projects.

Workers constructed Jacob’s Well in Brasat village, which will “have much more water than any other well in the community, especially in the dry season,” CBU said.

Seventy five families worked to rehabilitate a dirt road in Sampov Meas village. “People are happy with their own road production! It is easy for transportation,” the CBU report states. “It is easy to travel through their village, no more muddy road and no more flooding in the rainy season.”

A distribution center was opened on April 26 for persons and families that participate in the Food for Work Program. Eighty nine families received assistance during the opening of the distribution center.
Baptists in the state of Louisiana in the United States have plans to offer assistance to help in mitigating the effects of a massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The spill, which began on April 20, is threatening several states, including Louisiana and Mississippi following a catastrophic explosion on a drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico. An oil well approximately one mile or 1.6 kilometers below the surface, operated by the drilling platform, is leaking large amounts of oil out into the sea.

Eleven people died in the explosion. The millions of gallons of oil being pumped into the sea are threatening marshes, wetlands, breeding grounds and wildlife. Many communities face permanent contamination of the natural environment. Industries such as fishing, shrimping and tourism are being affected.

Baptists conducted a “pre-landfall,” cleanup, that is, before the oil reaches land, on June 5 in Cameron Parish to remove natural and man-made debris and trash on the shorelines. Such debris and trash can potentially get covered in oil and make the cleanup of the affected areas more difficult.

One congregation, Live Oak Baptist Church in Terrebonne Parish, offered its physical facilities as a staging area for workers hired by BP, which operates the deep water oil well, to install booms, which are placed in the sea to help prevent damage to the shoreline.

Baptists in communities affected or that are expected to be affected are fearful. “If they shut down the shrimping and then also shut down the oil industry here, we are going to be really hurting,” said Tommy Bellon, pastor of Live Oak. “If we get hit by a tropical storm or hurricane, we will probably be dealing with a massive cleanup for quite some time.”

“This desperate situation is threatening their way of life, culture and livelihood,” wrote G. Reid Doster, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) of Louisiana. “It is all they have ever known and the prospect of losing it is obviously traumatic.”

CBF of Louisiana is planning to provide training in the handling of critical incident stress and in crisis counseling. Such training, Doster said, “might also prove to be an effective way of heightening disaster awareness among our constituents and getting folks more invested in disaster response ministry.”

Bellon indicated that the people in the affected areas need “caring Christians who possess crisis counseling skills,” and who are available “simply to express the love of God through compassionate listening.”

Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam urged quick action by those responsible to mitigate the damage and to prevent similar disasters in the future. “Creation care is part of our responsibility as human beings made to share creation. This oil spill is a sign of our failure to live up to this responsibility,” Callam said. “It is incumbent on us to call upon all those concerned to work speedily to reduce the damage being done and to develop and implement policies that will lessen the possibility of similar devastation to the natural environment in the future.”

The Bangladesh Baptist Church Fellowship (BBCF), established in 1919 by missionaries from Australia and New Zealand, held its Mission Conference and Biennial General Meeting from April 7-11, 2010. The meetings were held at the 30-acre BBCF Conference Center and Prayer Garden, 50 kilometers, or 30 miles, from Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh.

Approximately 500 delegates from many of the 472 local churches affiliated with the BBCF, including pastors, evangelists, women and youth leaders, as well as other lay persons, attended the five-day event.

A highlight of the meetings was the ordination of 10 pastors to the Christian ministry, including one female, Aroti Chowdhury. Chowdhury is the second woman to be ordained by the BBCF. The first was Judith Milita Das, who is secretary of the Asian Baptist Women’s Union.

The BBCF also reported rapid growth, as 28 new churches were
Baptists in South Africa used the FIFA World Cup as a mission opportunity. The World Cup is the most widely-viewed sporting event in the world and was held between June 11 and July 11, 2010, in South Africa, the first African nation to host the prestigious tournament.

Activities planned by Baptists in South Africa included the screening of all matches in churches; witnessing at soccer stadiums; the arrangement of special soccer tournaments, especially for youth and children; the publication of a special *World Cup Challenge* newspaper; and the distribution of the South Africa flag with gospel messages.

One initiative was the Ignite Internship Program, a ministry of Eastside Community Church in Pretoria which aimed to create a team of interns in order to partner with other churches during the soccer tournament; establish a soccer academy; and develop and implement ministry opportunities to complement the soccer ministry.

The volunteers ran street soccer tournaments. Such events tend to draw crowds and thus create opportunities for the presentation of the Gospel.

“We with the prospect of hundreds of thousands of international visitors arriving for the FIFA Soccer World Cup in June 2010, the South African church is uniquely placed to impact many for Christ,” the Eastside Community Church states. “Not only can the lives of international visitors be touched, but also locals, particularly those who love ‘the beautiful game.’”

Baptists from the state of Virginia in the United States took a group of volunteers to South Africa to share in the Ignite Internship Program. The volunteers helped to lead soccer clinics, pick-up games, and music and drama, and provided children’s ministry with a soccer theme.

A team of approximately 180 Brazilian Baptist volunteers were in South Africa, led by pastor and missionary Marcos Grava, coordinator of the Sports Missionary Program of the World Mission Board of the Brazilian Baptist Convention. The team of volunteers was part of the Africa 2010 Connection Program, and was slated to work in the vicinity of several World Cup stadiums from June 2 to July 19.

The Africa Connection 2010 Program is a partnership between the World Mission Board and the Brazilian Coalition of Sports Ministry, with the support of the Baptist Seminary of Theology in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Among the events and activities planned by the Brazilians were sporting events, personal evangelism and discipleship, Vacation Bible School, music, dancing, seminars and crusade meetings in churches, children’s ministry, and medical and dental care.
The Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) held its 60th annual meeting from April 16-18, 2010, in Williamnagare, Meghalaya state.

The churches in North East India were planted mainly by missionaries from the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society approximately 175 years ago. Subsequent to having gained autonomy, six of the 11 conventions in North East India joined the CBCNEI, which was formed in the 1950s. The six conventions are the Assam Baptist Convention, the Garo Baptist Convention of India, the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention, the Manipur Baptist Convention, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, and the Arunachal Baptist Church Council.

Since the 1950s, the CBCNEI has grown from less than 2,000 churches to almost 6,000 churches, and has a membership of just over 175,000.

This year Roger Martin, senior minister at the Stockton Tabernacle, Stockton-On-Tees in north east England, and vice chairman of Spurgeon’s College in London, was due to become president. It was not to be however, as, tragically, just weeks after the Baptist Assembly in May 2009, Martin died from cancer.

As a tribute to Martin, members of his family took a prominent part at the assembly. His widow, Liz, stood alongside BUGB General Secretary Jonathan Edwards and BMS World Mission General Director David Kerrigan and shook the hands of those ministers who had received accreditation this year, a role that Martin would have done. Two of Martin’s sons addressed the assembly; Karl Martin, who is senior pastor at Morningside Baptist Church in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Reuben Martin, a church planter for BMS World Mission, currently leading a church in Rouen, France.

At the start of his talk, Reuben revealed that during his ministry his father had baptized more than 750 people and sent more than 30 people into full time ministry both in Britain and overseas. The theme for the assembly, “One World, One Mission,” was Roger Martin’s idea. “Mission was his passion, making Jesus known was his thing. And he wanted to communicate that passion to others and rekindle a passion for mission – local mission – world mission – among the Baptist churches of Great Britain. And so...we’re going to explore his theme, this theme of ‘One World, One Mission’ – the need to become passionate once again about mission, the need to become passionate once again about winning this world for Jesus Christ,” Reuben said.

On the last morning of the assembly two public resolutions were passed, one calling on governments to reduce the amount of nuclear weapons through the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty Conference that happened in May, and one on Violence and Human Trafficking which was seconded by European Baptist Federation General Secretary Tony Peck. There was also time in this session for the assembly to reflect on what pastors and delegates felt God had been saying over the weekend. BMS World Mission General Director David Kerrigan and BUGB General Secretary Jonathan Edwards gave their own take on the message of the assembly. “How can we bring the good news to everyone?” Kerrigan asked. “Let's get engaged with difficult issues, be involved in our communities, get deeper and risk more with God,” said Edwards.

Chris Hall is a writer and editor for the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

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Above: A choir sings during the 60th annual meeting of Baptists in North East India in April

Right: A.K. Lama, the General Secretary of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India, right, addresses the gathering, assisted by an interpreter.
Approximately 300 delegates from 60 countries, including 17 Baptists from 13 countries, attended the centenary of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, from June 2-6. The first conference, held in Edinburgh in June 1910, is regarded as the event that sparked the modern Protestant ecumenical movement and that which gave impetus to international Christian mission.

“Prominent among the 2010 participants was the significant contribution of the many women working in mission agencies, missiological faculties, various mission networks, and church departments of mission,” wrote Darrell Jackson, director of the Nova Research Centre at Redcliffe College in the United Kingdom, and convener of one of the study groups at the conference.

Roy Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, and one of four official BWA representatives at the event stated that “one can clearly see the global expansion of the faith since 1910 in the makeup of those attending.” The latest statistics, Medley said, “are that 60 percent of all Christians now live in the Southern hemisphere. The foremost mother tongue in the church today is Spanish. Religious pluralism due to migration and other factors has increased throughout the world except in predominantly Muslim countries. Asia is the most religiously diverse region in the world.”

Malkhaz Songulashvili, archbishop of the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia and another BWA representative, declared that “Edinburgh 2010 should be considered a huge success not only because of all the sessions and documents that were discussed and approved, but also because it was a fascinating encounter of God’s people from all sorts of traditions, cultures and countries.”

Songulashvili noted that “Protestants, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Oriental and Eastern Orthodox came together to discuss matters of common interests on an equal footing.” Jackson observed that many “plenary presentations and small group discussions were led by a variety of individuals from around the world.”

The major focus of the conference was on nine themes, including foundations for mission, other faiths, mission spirituality, mission and unity, and theological education for mission.

Common Call, a declaration released during the five days of meeting, asserted that “the church, as a sign and symbol of the reign of God, is called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God’s mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.”

Common Call implored the church to trust in the Triune God with a renewed sense of urgency, to remember Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross and his resurrection for the world’s salvation, to know the Holy Spirit, and to affirm the importance of the biblical foundations of missional engagement.

The declaration affirmed that Christians should incarnate and proclaim the good news of salvation; enter into authentic dialogue, respectful engagement and humble witness among people of other faiths – and no faith – to the uniqueness of Christ; celebrate the renewal experienced through movements of migration and mission in all directions; become communities of compassion and healing; and to have a new zeal for justice, peace and the protection of the environment.

Medley indicated that “questions as to the nature of the relationship of the Christian faith to other faiths and to culture” will continue to be of great interest to those who are engaged “in missiological circles.”

The four BWA representatives at the mission conference were Medley from the United States; Songulashvili from the Caucasus country of Georgia; Marvia Lawes, a Jamaican missioner in Panama; and Noah Moses.
The 19th BWA Living Water international conference was held at the Girassol Hotel in Maputo, the capital city of Mozambique on Africa’s southeastern coast, from May 20-23, 2010. It was the last in a series of conferences held for the five-year period 2005-2010, which began with a launch at the Baptist World Congress in Birmingham, England, in 2005.

The Maputo conference brought 100 leaders together from countries throughout Southern Africa – Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Delegates were quick to acknowledge the importance for African people of the life-giving water that faith in Christ guarantees, perhaps more so because Africa is a continent where water is such a vital and precious commodity.

There was rich fellowship between the 100 delegates throughout the three-day conference. It was joyous Christian fellowship accompanied by singing in a variety of African languages and English.

At the Saturday evening rally in the city church, each national group sang praises to God in its own language. To be present was to be inspired. Africans insist, “We cannot worship without movement,” and the singing, dance, energetic movement and total joy was extremely infectious.

An important aspect of the conference was when each delegation reported on efforts to spread the Good News of Christ’s love and grace in their own areas. Despite the enormous challenges facing church and community in Southern Africa, there was a spirit of hope and optimism in what the Lord will continue to do through their outreach ministries. Individual testimonies about significant ministries by individuals and churches reaching out into the community were a highlight.

There were several features concentrating on the water motif, such as the opening event where delegation leaders poured water from cupped hands onto the African soil while declaring in their vernacular language, *Jesus Christ: Living Water*; water pouring with accompanying liturgy as part of the worship service; and a foot-washing ceremony as part of the communion service to emphasize servant leadership.

These were very moving. Although performed at successive Living Water conferences, these activities are new to every new set of leaders, and thus maintain their impact and power.

Speakers included Paul Msiza, president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship (AABF) and general secretary for the South Africa Baptist Convention; Harrison Olan’g, BWA regional secretary for Africa and general secretary of the AABF; George Nganlama, of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa; and Harold Peasley, a Baptist evangelist from South Africa.

The BWA delegation comprised General Secretary Neville Callam; Fausto Vasconcelos, director of the Division of Evangelism and Education (E&E); Emmett Dunn, BWA Youth Department director and director of conferences; Ronald Bobo, a member of the BWA General Council and Executive Committee, and chair of the Executive Committee of E&E; and Tony Cupit, BWA Living Water coordinator.

With Maputo concluding the series of Living Water conferences, we can give thanks to our loving God for all the blessings of the Living Water conferences from St. Petersburg in Russia through to Maputo, from 2005 to the present. Almost 5,000 Baptists during the last five years have shared the Living Water experience as delegates to the Living Water conferences. Our prayer is that the influence of these initiatives and the resolve of those who have participated will flow to our Baptist people throughout the world “like streams of living water.”

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*Living Water Conference*

**CHALLENGE & HOPE**

in Southern Africa

by Tony Cupit

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Top: Early morning devotions by the swimming pool during the BWA Living Water conference in Mozambique

Below: Delegates pictured standing before the Living Water banner
Aproximately 530 delegates attended the Baptist World Alliance Living Water conference in Havana, Cuba, from March 23-26.

Delegates traveled from Santiago, Las Tunas, Bayamo, Camaguey, Via Clara, Guantanamo and indeed from all regions of Cuba. Even an earthquake that struck Santiago de Cuba a few days before the conference began did not prevent the delegates from attending. There was a festive air as the meetings began which even heightened the expectation and the serious intent of the Living Water conference.

By far the most powerful impact this Living Water conference may have on the strengthening of the churches was the coming together of the four Baptist communities in Cuba, the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba, the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba, the Freewill Baptist Convention of Cuba and the Fraternity of Baptists in Cuba. Only those present can understand the deep feelings this evoked. Relationships have traditionally been strained between some of the bodies and it has been a struggle to achieve reconciliation. But at this Living Water conference, true Christian fellowship was experienced. The presidents of the four conventions washed each others’ feet, celebrated as part of a moving foot-washing ceremony where other leaders washed the feet of selected delegates.

This was consistent with the servant leadership emphasis in the conference and a re-enactment of Jesus washing the accumulated dust off His disciples’ feet.

Very joyous, effervescent music characterized the worship throughout. There were well-known Spanish language hymns and praise songs. But the Cubans decided to compose their own Living Water theme song, a great new tune with very appropriate words. Once learned, it quickly became a favorite and was sung throughout the conference with exuberance:

Christ is the Living Water, He is the light and truth. He is the never-ending source of joy. To whoever trusts in him, eternal life will gush forth, like a spring, from his soul.

It was fascinating to observe and enjoy the instrumentalis who supported the worship team. There were players of keyboards, drums, trumpets, clarinets, flutes, saxophones, guitars as well as indigenous instruments. Cubans are known for their music and the churches are blessed with large numbers of extremely talented singers and musicians. We were blessed by the marvelous worship through joyous singing and superb worship leadership.

Most Living Water conferences include creative features that highlight the water motif. There is always a water-pouring event with accompanying liturgy. A specially created well was positioned in the center of the stage area. Young people dressed in appropriate costumes re-enacted themes and scenes from the Bible, including the story of the woman at the well in John 4.

People came to study and to explore issues relevant to the Cuban situation. Afternoon sessions consisted of 20 workgroups and six affinity groups for pastors, young

(Continued on next page)
people, women, home missionaries, denominational leaders and evangelists.

Activity in one workgroup was extremely moving. The leader, basing her talk on the Book of Job and the Psalms, asked each participant to write a prayer of lament, recognizing the suffering faced by many Cubans.

The Cuban Baptist leaders arranged for a delegation to visit with the Minister for Religious Affairs and her colleagues in the offices of the Central Committee of the Cuban government. Such exchanges, the Baptist leaders believe, strengthen the hands of the churches, especially when the visiting delegation consists of leaders of an international body like the BWA.

The minister, Mrs. Caridad, received the delegation, made up of Cuban leaders and BWA personnel, with warmth, and expressed appreciation for the increased cooperation between the four Baptist bodies in Cuba. She urged Baptists to continue to play their part in promoting a good and peaceful society. Issues the delegation raised with the minister included the status of house churches in Cuba, problems faced by pastors and others in Cuba with government policies, the importation of Christian literature, and the Baptist passion for liberty in Christ and in society.

That evening, the minister and three of her colleagues attended the major evening rally at Calvary Baptist Church. Cuban Baptists unashamedly and repeatedly declared their hope in Cuba for Christ, a phrase the government leaders could hardly have failed to note.

Victor Samuel Gonzalez, president of the Western convention and a vice president-elect of the BWA, coordinated the work of about 150 Baptist volunteers from the four conventions to ensure this Living Water conference was memorable. It was!

The growth of Baptist churches throughout the island is testimony to the faith and dedication of our brothers and sisters in Christ on this island.

Among the speakers at the event were Everton Jackson, newly elected executive secretary/treasurer of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship; Elmer Lavastida, well-known leader from the Eastern convention; Raymundo Aguilera, a professor from Havana; John Sundquist and Ronald Bobo, members of the BWA General Council and Executive Committee; Daniel Carro, first vice president-elect of the BWA; and Tony Cupit, BWA Living Water coordinator.
We cannot overlook the historical fact that, before the first seeds of the Gospel were planted in Protestant format, the Island of Cuba spent four centuries under the influence of Spanish Catholicism.

**The Early Years**

In the 19th century, there were isolated cases of Protestant presence in Cuba. Diego (James) Thompson came as “colporteur” of the Bible Society of London. He was arrested in Santiago de Cuba in 1838 for distributing Scriptures in Spanish, and later on was expelled from the island by the Spanish authorities.

1883 was decisive for Cuban Protestants. Four men returned to the Island who had been converted in Protestant churches in the United States during their exile as Cuban Patriots: Pedro Duarte (Episcopal), Evaristo Collazo (Presbyterian), Enrique Someillan (Methodist) and Alberto Díaz (Baptist).

Even though in 1883 Alberto Díaz was connected to the Episcopal church and supported as a “colporteur” by the Bible Society of Philadelphia, in January of 1885 he came in contact with William Wood, Baptist pastor in Key West, who came to Havana and performed the first baptisms by immersion in the Bay of Havana. That first congregation was organized and called Gethsemane and Díaz was named as its pastor.

We cannot omit Adela Fales, a young girl whose parents lived in Biloxi, Mississippi, in the US, but later moved to Key West, Florida. Because of Fales’ insistent plea, her pastor, Wood, went to Cuba and made contact with Alberto Díaz. This episode is known as “The Mission of the Girl.” In 1887, in only two years, the number of baptized persons reached 169 in the five congregations in and near the city.

The North American churches wanted to control the evangelization of Cuba and the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention sent Charles D. Daniel to Havana. He began an English-speaking congregation that met for worship in the same building where the Gethsemane congregation worshipped. It was not long before a conflict developed between Diaz and the North American mission represented by Daniel. This clash went as far as the public courts which passed sentence against Diaz, and finally the Cuban congregation was expelled from the building together with its pastor. The congregation that remained in the building changed its name to Calvary Baptist Church.

(Continued on next page)
The Story of the Founding of a Baptist Church in Cuba

Several years ago a Baptist farmer from the area of Baracoa bought a coffee plantation north of the town of San Luis, in a place called La Fuente. This rural area is near the hinterlands and the Gospel had never been preached there. Sister Armanda Suarez, wife of the farmer, finished picking coffee together with a group of neighbors who came to help in the harvest.

Armanda put down the sack full of red coffee beans at her feet and announced to those that surrounded her: “Let us have a word of prayer.” The peasant woman raised her head and spoke to God with gratitude for the work of the day. The neighbors were impacted by that prayer. The next day Armanda repeated the scene as she talked with God with such passion that the other workers were left awed.

Observing the interest that her neighbors showed in hearing God’s Word, Armanda invited them to her house and a prayer cell was born in her living room. Interest grew until the crowd could not fit in her modest farm home. Armanda and her husband felt they needed to find help to care for these new converts and they traveled to Santiago de Cuba to the offices of the Eastern Baptist Convention.

What a joy and surprise when this couple reported on the services they already held in her house with more than 50 persons attending. They asked for a student from the seminary to be sent or a missionary to gather this harvest. When their home was visited by leaders of the convention the experience of Barnabas arriving in Antioch repeated itself. Acts 11:23 says, “When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.”

Today there is a church in La Fuente. There is a chapel and a house for the pastor to the glory of God.

— as told by Elmer Lavastida Alfonso

One of the men baptized in the bay of Havana in January of 1885 was José O’Halloran who became a very active member of the Gethsemane congregation. When the struggles for Cuban independence resumed in 1893, many of the patriots were forced to emigrate to the United States, including O’Halloran. O’Halloran remained in Key West where he was ordained to the Christian ministry at the same time that he participated in the Cuban Revolutionary Party, organized and guided by José Martí.

As soon as O’Halloran knew of the capitulation of Spain in July of 1898, he returned to Cuba, but went to Santiago de Cuba in the eastern part of the island, where he arrived toward the end of August when the city still suffered the consequences of the war: hunger, death, epidemics, poverty and “orphanhood.” In the chronicles of Emilio Bacardi Moreaux, mayor of the city, the first Baptist service was registered on September 1, 1898, on Juan Nepomuceno Street. In only five months, José O’Halloran baptized 175 persons.

Growth and Expansion

The growth of the gospel in both ends of the island can be seen as buds, or shoots. There were shoots not only in Havana, but in Cienfuegos, Santa Clara, Sagua la Grande, Matanzas—not only in Santiago de Cuba, but also in El Cristo, Alto Songo, Guantánamo, Palma Soriano, and Manzanillo.

On November 23, 1898, in a meeting in Washington, the Home Mission Board of the SBC signed an agreement with the American Baptist Home Mission Society, dividing the work in Cuba in such a way that the Western end (Pinar del Río, Habana, Matanzas and Las Villas) remained under Southern Baptists, and the Eastern area (Camaguey and Oriente) was under the Northern Baptist Convention.

In 1905, three important events took place: the two Baptist Conventions—Eastern and Western—were organized, and significantly, the Baptist World Alliance was founded in that same year in England.

Having past the first decade of Baptist work in Cuba, the strength of the denomination was evident throughout the island. In spite of the fact that the foreign mission boards were reluctant to
allow nationals in positions of leadership – something characteristic of missiological concepts of the time – there were already pastors and lay persons assuming key responsibilities.

Because of the financial depression of the 1930s, many Haitians began emigrating to the Eastern region seeking work in the cane fields. Among those that came were Baptists from Haiti. Small congregations were formed in the farming villages (“bateyes”) of Tunas and Camaguey. The first congregation was born in Sabanazo and by 1930 there were 125 baptized members and a large group of candidates.

These congregations grew until the Baptist Haitian Convention was founded in 1939 in La Cupertina, province of Camaguey. This branch of missionary endeavor is very interesting because of its transcultural profile. It finally reached 52 churches and 2,000 members, plus 40 Sunday Schools. All communication was in the French Creole of Haiti. A Bible School was established by Anastasio Díaz with the collaboration of Hugo and Inna Rubens, an outstanding Haitian couple.

Many of these Haitians were repatriated by the Cuban government to reduce the critical economic crisis. Upon returning they took their Christian experiences acquired in Cuba and so “enlarged the place of their tent” in other shores.

Another branch that evidences the vigorous extension of the Gospel in Cuba was the birth of the Free Will Baptists in 1941. The background of the Free Will Baptists can be found in the labors of Arthur Pain and his two sons – Arthur and Hugo. Arthur, the father, was a Quaker, but his two sons did extensive evangelistic work. When the central highway was inaugurated in the 1930s, they organized an “evangelistic invasion” from West to East following the new road.

Hugh Pain directed the Association for the Evangelization of Cuba from Jaruco, province of Matanzas. He invited Thomas Willey and his wife, Mabel, to visit Cuba. Willey had worked in Peru, and after marrying Mabel, in Panama, worked with the Free Will Baptist Churches. Since the couple decided to establish themselves in Cuba they were recommended by the Foreign Mission Board of the Free Will Baptists, and opened a new work in Pinar del Río in 1941. In 1943 they had five churches and six Cuban pastors, 34 preaching places, 76 members and 200 candidates for baptism. The work extended from Jaruco and Arcos de Acasí in Matanzas, to congregations in Havana and Pinar del Río provinces. In 1944 a Bible School was established to prepare their pastors.

There was a division within the Western Baptist Convention during its assembly in 1989. Several congregations and their pastors joined together and in September of that year the Fraternity of Baptists in Cuba was organized. It has grown until today it numbers 39 churches and more than 3,500 members throughout the island.

The manner in which the Gospel has been planted has produced branches and sturdy trunks. The kingdom continues to grow through the simple witness of Jesus’ followers. The project launched in Acts 1:8 does not lose validity at this stage of the 21st century.

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The manner in which the Gospel has been planted has produced branches and sturdy trunks. The kingdom continues to grow through the simple witness of Jesus’ followers.

Elmer Lavastida Alfonso is pastor of Second Baptist Church in Santiago de Cuba and teaches at the Baptist seminary in Santiago. This article is an excerpt of a presentation made at the BWA Living Water conference in Havana on March 23, 2010.
The Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF) held its General Assembly from March 18-21, in Montego Bay, on Jamaica’s north coast.

The assembly, normally held every four years, brought together Baptist leaders and delegates from various countries in the Caribbean for worship, fellowship, study and decision meetings.

Among the most significant developments were changes in the leadership of the CBF, one of six regional fellowships of the Baptist World Alliance. William Thompson, immediate past president of the Bahamas National Baptist Missionary and Education Convention and a vice president of the BWA, was elected CBF president. Thompson succeeds Burchell Taylor of Jamaica who was elected CBF president in 2006 in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

Everton Jackson, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Montego Bay and a former president of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU), was elected executive secretary/treasurer. He succeeds Peter Pinder of the Bahamas who served in that position and as BWA regional secretary for the Caribbean for 15 years, beginning in 1995. Jackson is expected to be named BWA regional secretary for the Caribbean during the Baptist World Congress in Honolulu, Hawai’i, from July 28 to August 1.

The executive secretary/treasurer has day-to-day responsibility for the CBF.
Baptist churches in the Caribbean continue to minister in, and even use, challenging social and economic situations as ministry opportunities.

Other leaders elected include vice presidents Lincoln Conner from St. Kitts, Dominic Dick from Guadeloupe, and Jacinth Wood from Barbados.

The meeting received reports on the devastating earthquake in Haiti that occurred on January 12. An estimated 230,000 persons died in the 7.0 temblor near Port-au-Prince, the country’s capital. Tens of thousands were left injured, and more than one million left homeless.

Moïse Dorsinville, a consultant to the Baptist Convention of Haiti (BCH) and coordinator of its earthquake relief efforts, told the CBF meeting of the extent of the devastation and the work that Haitian Baptists were doing in offering aid and relief to the many thousands of victims.

Pinder reported on his visit to Haiti in February to assess the damage and to offer support to Baptists in the country. “My observation is that Haiti is a country under siege,” Pinder said. “The streets are patrolled day and night by a very large number of armed military personnel… including war tanks.”

Pinder indicated that “poverty and unsanitary conditions appear to be a major threat to health and satisfactory living arrangements.” More than US$30,000 was collected by the CBF for Haitian earthquake relief.

Prior to the earthquake in Haiti, the Caribbean regional Baptist body offered pastoral assistance for general church development in the Caribbean country; training in stewardship of the environment through soil conservation and reforestation; offered scholarships in teacher education and theological education; assisted in a school feeding program for more than 400 children; and offered aid in sourcing, storing and treating water.

The CBF, which represents churches in countries that are frequently affected by hurricanes and where several earthquake fault lines exist, is making preparation to form a disaster relief agency. Each country is expected to appoint a country disaster representative who will in turn represent the respective Baptist convention or union at the agency. The agency is to act as a clearing house for information on disaster preparedness and response and will provide training in relief and assistance. As part of the preparation of the formation of this agency, training in disaster preparedness and response was held in June 2009 in Hollywood, Florida, with eight countries represented.

A concern of the region is the need for more opportunities in theological education and ministerial training. The Azariah McKenzie Scholarship Fund, named after the first president and executive secretary/treasurer for the CBF, has been established to help meet this need. Recipients would do their studies and training at Caribbean institutions, such as the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI), located in St. Andrew, Jamaica.

Bodies such as the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Baptist Convention indicated the need for trained leadership. Despite reporting that Baptists are experiencing numerical and spiritual growth, all this is

(Continued on next page)
taking place “amidst the challenge of a leadership drought,” the convention reported.

Some conventions declared major undertakings. The Bahamas convention, which is celebrating 220 years of Baptist witness in the country, is constructing a multipurpose Baptist Complex that includes a 4,000-seat auditorium and new headquarters for the organization.

The Baptist Convention of Western Cuba reported significant growth, baptizing 1,590 persons in 2009. In addition to its 288 regular churches, the convention has more than 1,800 house churches as part of its ministry.

Baptist churches continue to minister in, and even use challenging social and economic situations as ministry opportunities. The French Federation of Baptists of Guadeloupe, which has six pastors and 14 churches, joined other Christian churches in addressing some of the needs and problems associated with the 44-day general strike that virtually crippled the French Caribbean Island in 2009. “The Lord used the strike to bring the churches together,” said Dick, the CBF vice president and immediate past president of the Baptist church group in that country.

The CBF took note of the region’s place in the life of the global Baptist family. The BWA planned three Living Water conferences in the Bahamas, Barbados and Cuba in 2008, 2009, and 2010 respectively; Victor Samuel Gonzalez of Cuba and Burchell Taylor of Jamaica are expected to be elected vice presidents of the BWA; two persons from the region are staff members at the BWA Center in Falls Church, Virginia, in the United States – Neville Callam, general secretary, and Eron Henry, associate director for communications; and Karl Johnson, general secretary of the JBU, will be one of the keynote speakers at the Baptist World Congress in Hawai’i.

A challenge facing the region is to adequately meet the needs of a region diverse in language and culture. Concerns were expressed in meetings that the CBF needs to do a

“The Bahamas convention is constructing a multipurpose Baptist Complex with a 4,000-seat auditorium”
William Thompson, new CBF president

“Common experiences . . . a history of being colonized, a shared history of slavery.”
— Deonie Duncan, Jamaican Baptist pastor

“We are all guests in these lands through enslavement and immigration on Amerindian lands”
— Glenroy Lalor, Baptist warden, UTCWI
better job at reaching out to Spanish-speaking Cuba and Dominican Republic, and French-speaking Guadeloupe, Martinique and Haiti. There is need, for instance, to make the Sunday School teacher and learner guides produced by the Caribbean Christian Publications (CCP) available in both Spanish and French.

The CCP, which, in addition to Sunday School resources, publishes Vacation Bible School materials, tracts, and other publications for Caribbean churches, continues its important ministries despite difficulties occasioned by the worldwide economic recession. Sunday School Worker Training Seminars, an important ministry of CCP, are being held in various locations in the Caribbean area, including in Panama, Guyana, Jamaica and San Andres, Colombia.

Several speakers at the assembly highlighted Caribbean challenges and urged Caribbean Baptists to redouble their effort and commitment even in the face of these grave challenges. “There is the need for Caribbean church people to cultivate a culture of daring,” outgoing CBF President Taylor declared. People in the region need “to think that one can make a difference in devastating circumstances.”

“We know what pain is,” said BWA vice president and past CBF president Vincent Wood. “Situations in life change but we rely on the unchanging God.”

Glenroy Lalor, Baptist warden and tutor at UTCWI, said that “the Caribbean can best be described as a community of guests – we are all guests in these lands through enslavement and immigration on Amerindian lands.” Therefore, “we are compelled not to mete out to others the same treatment we received.”

Deonie Duncan, a Jamaican Baptist pastor, stated that “the Caribbean Sea binds and separates the Caribbean.” The region has suffered “historical divisions based on colonialism, neo-colonialism, separate languages, national sovereignty, and religious influences.” But there are factors that bring people in the Caribbean together – common experiences, similar sizes and settings, a history of being colonized, and a shared history of slavery.

Pinder expressed words of hope. “Regardless of the past, what we have is a future filled with opportunities, because of who God is. We have all we need in God.”

Cawley Bolt, JBU president, hoped “that the CBF will be a sign of unity among Baptists in the region despite differing experiences. It is possible for the Caribbean people to come together.”

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“The Lord used the strike to bring the churches together.”
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Haitian Baptists are offering aid and relief to the many thousands of victims.
Moïse Dorsinville, consultant to the Baptist Convention of Haiti & coordinator of its earthquake relief efforts.
Kongo formally became a Christian nation when in 1491 King Nzinga a Nkuwu was baptized by Portuguese trader-missionaries as João I, and took the name of the then King of Portugal, João II. It went a step further on this path when his son, Afonso Mvemba a Nzinga (1506-43), established Christianity as a religion of the state.

The most common Christian symbol found among Kongolese Christians when the Iberians came was the Coptic cross. These crosses normally had their vertical and horizontal beams of equal length, symbolizing that their love for God (the vertical) and neighbor (the horizontal) were of equal importance, in contradistinction with that of Western Christianity whose cross had a longer vertical arm symbolizing that the love for God was more important than the love for neighbor.

During the period 1600-1848, Kongo went from being a regional national power to a colonized state. There were border disputes with the Portuguese-sponsored breakaway southern kingdom of Ndongo (later called Angola) and with that of Jaga – the “barbarian” state to the east. Internally there was the beginning of crippling civil wars.

With Kongolese becoming more and more desperate and scattered, several movements sprung up. One was the Antonian Christian Movement, led by Dona Beatriz (Beatrice) Kimpa Vita, present within Kongolese territorial space in 1684-1706. It ultimately outlived its founder who was burnt on the stake in 1706 for challenging the Iberian-Christendom hegemonic order. Though it did not survive as an organized movement within Kongo, it continued in pockets across the region and across the Atlantic.

Kongolese people and people from the entire Western Central African region, including Antonian Christians, were exported to Iberian Brazil, the eastern seaboard of the United States – from Maryland to Georgia – Louisiana, and the entire Caribbean – specifically through the British, French and Spanish regions, including Jamaica.1

It should come as no surprise that Dona Vita’s movement was incarnated by those Kongolese Christians who were scattered all over the so-called “New World.” There is evidence of such persons leading an uprising in British South Carolina in 1739. There are also clear linkages between the Antonian movement and the Haitian revolution, as a number of Haitians who participated in this revolt came from the Kongo as followers of Dona Vita.2 Enslaved Kongolose Antonians were also sent to Jamaica, but underwent a name change over time. John Thornton
records voyages made by some from West Africa to Jamaica, while Maureen Warner-Lewis says:

“Myaal was present in Jamaica from at least the 1760s. It may be considered a trans-Atlantic echo of the Antonite Movement of Kongolo in as much as they so far manifested an amalgamation of religious observances in Jamaica, which contained in various proportions, elements of both African and Christian religious concepts and practices.”

Despite the fact that European-centered Christianity had officially been introduced in Jamaica for almost 300 years prior to 1783, it was never connected to the aspirations of the majority of the peoples in dealing frontally with the realities of slavery, racism, colonialism, and classicism. Furthermore, Euro-centered Christianity largely ignored the fact that many persons, including those descended from Africans, had their own developed religious worldviews. The religions on which these views were based included Kongolese Antonianism that had been present in the Americas, including Jamaica, for a number of years.

It can be seen that Kongolese Christians were among those who came to the British Protestant country of Jamaica, carrying their faith and more precisely, their theological, cultural, and political outlook.

It has also been long noted that there had been much movement between the Americas (North, Central, and South) and the Caribbean. What is not always noted was some of these movements were between people of similar ethnic and religious backgrounds. There is evidence to suggest that not only were there high concentrations of enslaved Kongolese in general, and of Kongolese Antonian Christians in particular in both the eastern seaboard of pre-independent USA and Jamaica in the first half of the 18th century, but also that such persons from the USA sought to flee to the latter in times of crisis, such as during the American Wars of Independence. African Americans who went as preachers and missionaries to Jamaica in the late 18th to mid-19th centuries were probably first and second generation Antonians who were seeking to escape racist hardships that were increasingly present in the revolutionary North American British colonies. As Kongolese Antonians, they would also have joined the struggle for self-determination of their fellow Kongolese Antonian Christians in Jamaica.

Led by George Liele in 1783, these African Americans came into a society that was already moving toward certain recognition of its intrinsic identity. “Ethiopian” Christians from the American territories made links with the Jamaican people, especially those of African origin, including between religion and race. Liele, for instance, named his congregations “The Ethiopian Baptist Churches of Jamaica.”

The churches they founded gave persons more direct access to hitherto restricted sources of learning. They started school on Sundays (later called “Sunday Schools”) in between worship services, developed to facilitate knowledge in reading, writing, arithmetic and Scripture.

They promoted the concept of collective sacred space. Chapels were built not only by, but also for the slave population. Prior to this, chapels were erected by slaves only for slave masters, with the attendant slave left outside of these buildings.

Stephen Jennings is pastor of Mona Baptist Church in St. Andrew, Jamaica; past president of the Jamaica Baptist Union; and a former member of the BWA General Council. This article is an excerpt from a presentation made during the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship General Assembly in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in March 2010.

NOTES
3 Ibid
4 Warner-Lewis 2003 190
5 See for instance Carnegie 2002
6 See Gomez 1998 for the demographic research; Frey and Wood 1998 for the historical research
7 Liele’s story and that of the Afro-Baptists is told variously by Gayle 2002; Reid 1988; Pugh 2003; Gordon 1988 and 1996; and Russell 1993
A conference on slave rebel and Jamaican National Hero Samuel Sharpe was held at Regent’s Park College, Oxford University, from April 13-15, 2010. Sharpe, who has become a subject of serious scholarly study in recent times, was a Baptist deacon and slave leader who led the slaves to strike for wages in December 1831. The strike eventually turned violent and erupted into what came to be known as the “Sam Sharpe Rebellion” or the “Baptist War.” It was finally crushed in May 1832 when more than 500 slaves, including Sharpe, were hanged.

Crushed in May 1832... more than 500 slaves, including Sharpe, were hanged.

A number of scholars contend that the rebellion hastened the end of slavery by Britain in its colonies, which occurred in 1838. Sharpe was named by the Jamaican government as a National Hero in 1975, the highest honor given by the country.

The conference had as its theme, “Sam Sharpe and the Quest for Liberation: Context, Theology and Legacy for Today,” and was a collaboration of the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture, BMS World Mission, the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB), and the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU). Leadership in planning the event was offered jointly by Paul Fiddes, university professor at Oxford, Delroy Reid-Salmon, research fellow at the Oxford Centre, and Nicolas Wood, director of the Oxford Centre.

Jamaica Baptist historians and theologians reflected on the story of the “Baptist War,” the theology informing it, and its implications for church and community in the Caribbean today.

British and American-based theologians and racial justice coordinators reflected on the significance of Sharpe’s work for people from the Caribbean and elsewhere living in North Atlantic diasporan communities.

Among the themes that arose during the conference were the relation of faith and freedom, with its linking of death and life, and its affirmation of racial inclusiveness as willed by God.

The conference addressed the contours of freedom, underscoring that something more than a master-slave relationship is needed if social harmony is to become a possibility.

The story of Sharpe “is of a Baptist Christian whose actions were clearly motivated by his faith and by his reading of scripture,” a release on the conference states. The release quoted Sharpe as saying, “In reading my Bible, I found that the white man had no more right to make a slave of me than I have to make a slave of the white man.” Sharpe, it says, “remains a witness to the principle of ‘liberation from below’: that is, true liberation comes when those who are oppressed or marginalized participate in making their own freedom and justice, rather than simply having it granted to them by those who have power and authority.”

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam delivered the sermon at the opening service. Presenters included Horace Russell and Cawley Bolt, members of the BWA Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity and the Academic and Theological Education Workgroup; Burchell Taylor, past president of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship and a member of the BWA General Council and Executive Committee; Wale Hudson-Roberts, the BUGB National Racial Justice Coordinator; Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed, former Racial Justice Coordinator for the London Baptist Association; Dwight Hopkins, professor of theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School; David Muir, former Executive Director for Public Policy and Public Theology at the Evangelical Alliance; and Lynnette Mullings of the Queens Theological Foundation in Birmingham, England.

“In reading my Bible, I found that the white man had no more right to make a slave of me than I have to make a slave of the white man.” — Samuel Sharpe
Paul Montacute, Director of Baptist World Aid, visited the island of Haiti from April 20-24, 2010, to assess the damage and to meet with Baptists in the country. Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince, and surrounding areas were devastated by a 7.0 magnitude quake on January 12.

“As we drove around the city (Port-au-Prince), some parts seemed untouched by the quake, whereas in other parts it was so difficult to move around,” Montacute reported. “The area around the Presidential Palace was a huge mess,” he said, with tents and portable toilets all around.

Montacute visited a plot of land that was donated to the Baptists by the mayor of Port-au-Prince. The land, which was donated some time before the earthquake, is to be used to build a complex consisting of a school, an orphanage, a cafeteria and a chapel. The project is to be undertaken as a joint venture between Haitian Baptists, Baptist World Aid, Hungarian Baptist Aid, and the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

A meeting was held with 12 pastors from the Baptist Convention of Haiti, and a trip was made to the compound of Baptist Haiti Mission, two member bodies of the BWA.

Baptists from around the world donated more than US$1.2 million to Baptist World Aid for Haitian earthquake relief.

Above: A displaced persons camp for victims of the January 12 earthquake in Port-au-Prince
Left: Children at an orphanage in Gressier, a small town near Port-au-Prince

Driving through Port-au-Prince

by Francisco Martínez Sarita

It is as if all things concerning the earthquake, the catastrophe, the dead, and so on, has been forgotten. As if nothing had ever occurred, as if it was false news, a dream that has vanished.

Nothing has changed among Haitians, nothing is better, nothing is worse, everything continues unchanged. That is my perception of the situation three months after the quake.

I looked over the main commercial street in Port-au-Prince. I observed the number of people, the level of informal commerce, the numbers of people buying and selling, the great deal of movement. As it was before the earthquake, so it is again.

As I pondered the situation through the window of my slow moving car, I asked myself: Is it true that there was an earthquake here? Do these people remember all the things that happened? Worse, do these people care about all the things that happened here just three months ago?

I have no way to catalogue what I saw and felt in my last trip to Haiti. I can only say that I was depressed and saddened by what I saw and felt.

On one side it might look satisfactory to observe a population that almost does not sleep trying to survive each day, to witness a high volume of movement from the early hours of the morning to the wee hours of the night.

(Continued on next page)
It is amazing to watch all kinds of informal stores, people running from one side to another, men pulling carts, women with big canisters on their heads. It is remarkable to see the streets full of products for sale, as many as anyone can imagine, from a stick to a bunch of cherries. That is indeed marvelous and encouraging.

In the midst of that hecatomb of economic movement, however, there is a hopeless scene of people who work without being able to stop, of people who are trying to reach a better something, a something that is not there, a something that cannot be seen, which is not near.

Beside these peoples, as faithful witnesses, the rubble that the quake left is still standing. The smell of death, the garbage, the disorder, the lack of cleanliness, the destroyed houses, the crooked buildings, the fractured buildings that are still on the verge of falling, all of them still stand there as mute storytellers.

At their side, walking over them, or passing below their broken columns, sitting on the fractured buildings, there are the people: buying, selling, without the time to look around or understand the dangerous situation, no time for reconstruction, no time to clean, no time to dream, no time to wait, no time to believe, no time to hope, no time for proposals, no time for a promise. The only available time is the time to survive, the time to fight for life, the time to not allow death to reach them that day, the time to reduce the pain while waiting for the night without knowing where to sleep, while waiting for a piece of bread or something to eat, while trying to live just another day.

There is a stronger competition for survival at the same time that there are better opportunities to an improved existence. In spite of all the efforts of the local and international organizations that are trying to alleviate the condition of Haitians, the situation now is not better than the one before the quake.

In the midst of crooked buildings and almost falling structures, in the midst of water in the streets and disease and filth everywhere you look, nothing gets better, everything seems to be standing still.

In the meantime the people of Haiti remain there: on the ground. There they sleep, there they buy and sell, there they live, and there they die.

As Baptists we strive to answer with another sense: with a sense of grief and a sense of compassion, with a sense of love, with a sense of urgency.

To our people and to the Haitian needy people, we promise that we will do for you as much as we are able, and more. Perhaps we lack strategies, plans, bureaucracies and meetings. But we will love you in action, in deed and toil, at least showing our very presence in the field.

Francisco Martínez Sarita is executive secretary of the Baptist Convention of the Dominican Republic. This article was first published by the News Service of the Argentine Baptist Association and was translated for the BWA by Daniel Carro.
On Saturday, March 13, 2010, our journey began at 5:30 a.m. toward the Eighth Region in Chile, one of the most affected areas after the earthquake on Saturday, February 27. We had committed ourselves to return after our previous trip on Saturday, March 6. This time more brethren accompanied us in order to be in those places, comforting our people in the churches, as well as the many other people we were able to reach out to with what we were bringing from the Ninth Region.

Our goal was to gather among the churches in the Southern District 1,000 kilos (2,200 lbs) of flour, yet by God’s grace and the generosity of our brothers and sisters we gathered 2,500 kilos (5,500 lbs), plus 500 kilos (1,100 lbs) from our people in the Lakes District in the Tenth Region, which includes our churches in our convention’s Mapuche area. Besides those 3,000 kilos (6,600 lbs) of flour, we were able to get with convention resources, salt, yeast, rice, noodles, milk, sugar, diapers, clothing gathered in the churches, and toys for the children.

We shared what we had with a group of women. Most of them are wives of fishermen that have lost everything. One of their most needed items was flour and hence that was what we requested from our churches which once again responded with abundant generosity. We had committed ourselves to those women, children, and their families; we could not fail them and thanks be to God, we delivered. Yet there is still so much more that we need to do for them and that is what we wish to do with all of our hearts.

Coronel was very important for its coal mining, but in the 1990s almost 100 percent of the mines were shut down due to the risk to the miners working in extremely dangerous conditions. Today the city is one of the poorest in Chile with high alcoholism rates. Driving through the neighborhoods we saw a lot of destruction, especially the main silo in the city that is now destroyed. Water service is just being restored and a lot of people are still in the hills fearing the sea. We left some provisions again and talked to some of the brethren at church. They said: “Brothers and sisters, we give thanks to God for the provisions you have given us so far. As you can see, most of us are well; the sanctuary has some minor cracks that need evaluation to assess the severity (though at first sight it doesn’t seem severe), so this help is enough for now. So, please concentrate on those that are most affected…” These words speak volumes of these brothers and sisters and their hearts as children of God. We will continue to labor and assist with God’s help.

Also that day a team of brethren traveled from our country’s capital, Santiago. Those churches had gathered food, clothes, and money to help in another very affected area of our nation, the Maule Region. This team left on the night of Friday, March 12, led by Pastor José Marín from the Baptist Church Cóndores de Chile, joined by 10 members of our churches. They began in Chillán to end in Curicó.

As you can see, this earthquake shook many regions in our country; in each of them there is a lot of damage. Yet, the Seventh and Eighth Regions are the more severely affected of our long and narrow land. May God help us with wisdom to be good stewards of the resources that will become available so that we can support each one of our brothers and sisters and country people that has lost everything. May God bless each of you that reads these lines and will be moved to compassion.

“I will lift up my eyes to the hills… from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth,” Psalm 121:1-2.

Mario Ramos is president of the Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission and a member of the General Council of the BWA.

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Top: Distributing earthquake relief items and supplies
Right: An area of devastation where 200 structures were destroyed by the powerful earthquake that affected Chile on February 27

Chile photos courtesy of Convention of Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) is deepening its commitment to work with the United Nations. Raimundo Barreto, director of the Division of Freedom and Justice at the BWA, attended meetings at the UN headquarters in New York in the United States in early April, while other BWA representatives attended UN meetings in other countries.

Barreto, who took office on March 1, attended briefings on Girls Education and the End of Poverty by the Department of Public Information of the UN Secretariat and NGOs. He also met with Kathleen Stone, UN chaplain; Christopher Ferguson, World Council of Churches representative and chair of the UN Committee of Religious NGOs; William Vendley, general secretary of Religions for Peace; and Nahleen Ahmed, a UN Economic and Social Council representative.

Barreto was accompanied at the UN meetings by Julie Justus, BWA Freedom and Justice Specialist.

Describing the New York meetings as “enlightening and productive,” Barreto declared, “We would like to reinforce that the BWA representation and participation at the UN is a high priority. It is at this level that the BWA can offer its unique contribution in the field of human rights advocacy. It is important to bring Baptist voices in order to play a more influential role in the important discussions that are taking place right now at the UN concerning religious freedom and other human rights.”

Barreto emphasized the positive role that the BWA can play in the international multilateral organization. “We as Baptists have a unique perspective that will enrich the conversation and the BWA can play a more positive role in the practical outcome of discussions. The fact that we have a large worldwide constituency behind our UN representation is recognized as an important factor to make our advocacy work at the UN more credible.”

The BWA continues to use qualified volunteer representation when needed.

“As part of the strategy we are using to strengthen our presence at the UN, we have sent a representative to attend the Twelfth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which took place in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, from April 12 to April 17,” Barreto said. Another BWA representative attended the meeting of the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns on April 28 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The BWA made several appointments to the UN. Luiz Nascimento, a Brazilian native who currently lives in New Jersey in the United States, will represent the BWA at the UN offices in New York. Shanta Premawardhana, a Sri Lankan-American living in Geneva, Switzerland, and a former pastor of a Baptist congregation in Chicago in the United States, will be the BWA UN representative in Geneva.

The BWA holds 22 seats in the UN main offices in New York, Geneva, and Vienna in Austria, and at regional offices in Santiago, Chile; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Bangkok, Thailand; and in Beirut. Barreto indicated that appointments to fill the other vacancies are forthcoming and will be done gradually.

BWA representatives to the UN, who are unpaid volunteers, are appointed to a two-year term, which may be renewed by mutual agreement between the BWA and the representative. The representatives monitor UN actions, programs and activities, and make reports on such actions, programs and activities to the BWA; advocate for and cultivate relationships at the UN on the behalf of the BWA; and participate in nongovernmental committees and caucuses at the UN.

The BWA, as a nongovernmental organization, has special consultative status with the United Nations, granted through its Economic and Social Council, and is also a member of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations. The special status, obtained in 1974, gives the BWA a higher level of access to all parts of the UN and the privilege of circulating its views to the General Assembly and the various commissions.
Davorin Peterlin, a former vice president of the Baptist Union of Croatia, died suddenly on June 14. He was 51 years old.

Peterlin spent most of his adult life in academia, having been appointed professor and academic dean at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia; professor at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic; director of the Keston Institute in Oxford, England; and a researcher at Oxford University’s Regent’s Park College, among other positions in other institutions.

At the time of his death, he was professor of Early Christianity and History of Minority Groups, head of the Research Department and academic resources officer at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Osijek. He served the Baptist Union of Croatia as vice president from 1995-1999.

Funeral services were held June 17 at the Zagreb Crematorium, in Croatia, and a memorial service at the Evangelical Theological Faculty on June 24.

Klaus Pritzkuleit, a member of the Youth Committee of the Baptist World Alliance in the 1980s, died suddenly on May 21, of a heart attack in Berlin, Germany. He was 59 years old.

Pritzkuleit became the full time youth executive officer for the Federation of Evangelical Free Churches (Baptist) in Germany in 1979, and a member of the youth committee of the European Baptist Federation, duties that took him throughout Eastern and Western Europe.

Deeply involved in the ecumenical movement in his country, he made sure that the voice of the Baptist church was heard in the German ecumenical movement. He was, at the time of his death, the CEO of the Diakonia Association, as well as the deputy chairman of the Committee on Ecumenical Diakonia. He became the managing director of the Diaconal Association in 2000, the liaison body between the diaconal work of the Evangelical Church in Germany, a federation of 22 Lutheran, Reformed and United Protestant regional church bodies in Germany, and the diaconal work of the Baptists.

Pritzkuleit helped to lead the fight for churches in Germany to overcome xenophobia, racism and violence and was actively involved in Bread for the World, a Christian movement formed to end hunger.

Funeral services took place on June 7 at the Berlin-Biesdorf cemetery.

He leaves wife Helma, daughter Judith, and son Benjamin.

Cecil Sherman, first coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) in the United States, died on April 17 of a massive heart attack. He was 82 years old.

Sherman, who pastored churches in the states of Georgia, Texas, North Carolina and Virginia, was elected the first coordinator of the CBF following the formation of that body in 1990, when a group of moderate churches and pastors withdrew from the Southern Baptist Convention. The CBF was granted membership in the Baptist World Alliance in 2003.

A supporter of the Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr., Sherman integrated the membership of First Baptist Church, Asheville, North Carolina, in the 1970s, admitting African Americans into membership despite opposition from leaders and members of the congregation.

The prolific author earned degrees from Baylor University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary. His last book, sent to the publishers one week before his death, was to be published in June.

Memorial services were held at River Road Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, and First Baptist Church, Asheville, North Carolina, on April 20 and 23, respectively.

Predeceased by his wife Dorothy in 2008, Sherman is survived by daughter Eugenia.

John Smith, president of the Baptist Union of New Zealand and the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society from 1980-81, died in Auckland on April 9. He was 92 years old.

The son of a Baptist pastor from Britain who moved with his family to New Zealand in 1907, Smith served as secretary of the Auckland Baptist Association from 1980 to 1985 after previously serving as president of the association in the early 1970s.

In 1957, he was elected president of the Bible Class Movement, a Christian youth organization formed in New Zealand in the early 20th century. The movement ran Sunday classes for various age groups, Easter camps, Bible reading and other competitions, and encouraged strong support for the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society.

After enlisting in the army during World War II, Smith, an accountant, worked as a company secretary in a manufacturing enterprise for more than 30 years.

He served the Epsom Baptist Church in various capacities for 33 years, as Sunday school teacher, superintendent of youth work, church organist, lay preacher, choir leader, deacon, elder and church secretary.

Beginning in 1978, he became actively involved in the Baptist church in Long Bay where he was an organist, deacon, elder, and home group leader.

He is survived by children Howard, Warwick, Derek and Gillian.
According to Devon Dick, Native Baptists were a distinctive 19th century religious movement in Jamaica. These were Christian believers who self-identified themselves as Native Baptists after they “broke away from the English Baptists in response to the discrimination against persons of African ancestry becoming pastors.”

The term Native Baptist came into use at the earliest in 1832. There were two distinct Native Baptist groups. The Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society formed sometime between September 1839 and July 1840, a few years before the English Baptists had established an independent missionary society in Jamaica. The second group, the Native Baptist Communion, was formed after the 1860-61 great revival in Jamaica and was concentrated mainly in the east of the island. Two of the most well known leaders of the Native Baptist Communion were George William Gordon and Paul Bogle, two of Jamaica’s seven National Heroes, the highest honor given in the country.

After the Native Baptist War in 1865, led by Bogle, and in which Gordon was implicated, the surviving Native Baptist churches were largely absorbed by the Jamaica Baptist Union, with which the English Baptists were affiliated. Many Native Baptist leaders, including Bogle and Gordon, were hanged or otherwise executed, and a number of churches destroyed or forced to close.

Native Baptists were inspired by George Liele, an African American former slave who started Baptist work in Jamaica in 1783, and Sam Sharpe, a Jamaican Baptist deacon and slave who led a rebellion in 1831-32. Dick, who did his PhD studies with the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom, said that these “were Christians whose spirituality embraced equality and justice for all humans,” and that they embraced “a hermeneutic of liberation.”

According to Dick, a member of the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity, the common view of Native Baptists as superstitious; as embracing and engaging in African religions and practices such as Obeah, Kumina and Myal; as not embracing orthodox Christian faith; and as disorganized are not borne out by the evidence. Native Baptists were “a significant denomination … whose outstanding contribution to Jamaica and the world has been neglected for far too long.”
FROM THE PRESIDENT
David Coffey

In Celebration of the Local Church

My final article for Baptist World is in celebration of the local church, not least because I am aware that the seeds for my ministry as BWA president were sown 60 years ago in a local Baptist church.

Two months ago my former youth leader died and this prompted me to reflect on the formative years of my Christian life. I give thanks to God for Eric Christie and his wife, Margaret, who laid foundation stones of discipleship in my life in the 1950s. Their love and devotion to Jesus Christ; their generous hospitality; their applied knowledge of the scriptures; and their selfless giving of time and energy was immensely fruitful in the lives of countless young people.

My local church was Union Street, Kingston on Thames, and there as a 17 year old I made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ in the waters of baptism. It was through this local church that I learned the basic principles of Christian leadership and eventually heard the call of God to be a preacher. My beloved pastor, Herbert Ward, taught me the rudiments of New Testament Greek, a labor of love sweetened only by the home cooking of his gifted wife, Mae!

My youth leader must have seen in me a potential preacher as one Sunday he asked me to read the scriptures and lead the congregation in prayer. The next step was preparing a short address for the children of the congregation and eventually I was invited to fly “solo pilot” and preach my first sermon.

Being discipled by Eric could be likened to playing tennis with Andre Agassi or taking a soccer lesson from David Beckham! Eric was challenging with his deep Bible studies grounding me in the principles of Christian discipleship. In the local church I was taught Baptist basics such as the priesthood of all faithful believers and I learned to tackle the big issues of justice and religious liberty, and peace and reconciliation. I was introduced to the core value of spiritual accountability to other believers and a healthy church discipline that was devoid of judgmentalism.

In the local church I realized that God intends the church to be, in Jurgen Moltmann’s memorable phrase, “the fellowship of the unlike.” We are called to be one in Christ but this is not to be confused with being the same in Christ. My church leaders modeled for me a generous hospitality of the heart toward believers of other Christian traditions. I was taught that theology and doctrine were of deep importance, but that you always held your doctrinal convictions with a humble spirit, believing “that the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from his Word.”

In the local church I caught the meaning of “life in the Spirit.” I realized that dead-eyed devotion to orthodox truth without the invigorating power of the Holy Spirit produces a church of cold Christians. But a church that stays close to Jesus and hoists its sails to the wind of the missionary Spirit is driven inevitably into a life of continuous mission-partnership with God.

I confess that my local church was a messy fellowship and we experienced failures and disappointments; the sermons were sometimes long and boring and the choir was occasionally out of tune; people did lie and leaders fell out with each other. Our church was not a story of unbroken evangelistic success. But the best thing I recall about my church family is that they knew their way out of a church mess; confession, repentance and forgiveness was the way back to following Jesus.

The worship of my local church enabled me to see the world with different eyes and taught me to be a dissenter. Here I encountered encouraging fellowship, rich humor and the deep joy of a shared commitment of following Jesus. Somewhere in those early years I discovered I had a world family of believers and I was called to live locally with a heart for the global church. Little did I realize then that my ministry would “go global” and I would enjoy the privilege of serving as an international pastor.

When I was commissioned as BWA president in July 2005 I shared the values that would shape my service and this included the affirmation, “I believe in the Church.” As I hand the presidential baton to my gifted friend, John Upton, I praise God for the local church that equipped me to serve the global family of Baptists.
Hear the Spirit

at the

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