Tony Cupit, former director of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Divisions of Evangelism and Education and Study and Research (both now merged into the Division of Mission, Evangelism and Theological Reflection), was conferred with an honorary doctorate by the John Leland Center for Theological Studies.

Described by Leland as “among the great international figures in Baptist life today,” Cupit, an Australian, was keynote speaker at the June 9 graduation ceremony for the class of 2012. He was honored “for his extraordinary leadership in ministry over some forty plus years.”

The citation praised Cupit as a pastor, missionary, Bible translator, author, church executive and international Baptist leader whose ministry exemplified the model of transformational leadership in global ministry.

Cupit was BWA director from 1991 to 2005. Prior to that, he served the Australian and international Baptist communities in a number of capacities, including as a missionary to Papua New Guinea where, among other things, he and wife, Margaret, played leading roles in translating Christian scripture into the indigenous language.

In his address, Cupit recounted the sacrificial discipleship of Christians in various parts of the world, past and present, including Baptists. He told the gathering that “the church in the world, including its Baptist expression, continues to be a martyr church.” Recounting past and recent episodes of martyrdom and persecution, he said “if taking up a cross is metaphorical for us, let us always remember it is a reality for our brothers and sisters in Christ in different places throughout the world.”

Cupit explained that “Jesus connected his messiahship with suffering and death” which, at first, “was incomprehensible to the disciples.” He encouraged the graduates to “take up Jesus’ cross,” asserting that “the easy way is not the way of Jesus” because Jesus offered his followers a “life of denial, hardship and sacrifice.”

Twenty persons graduated from the Leland Center. The theological school traces its origins to ideas proposed at a Baptist International Conference on Theological Education held by the BWA in Vancouver, Canada, in 1997.
Major Steps Toward Reconciliation in Kenya

Callam Calls for Balanced Representation in International Dialogues

Pastors Say Technology Is Risky but Helpful

SWEDEN

Baptists Form Joint Church Body with Methodist and Covenant Denominations

Joint Future: On the Way to a Uniting Church

THE SCOURGE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

MYANMAR

Women’s Groups Protest Rape in Myanmar

BWA Assists School Reconstruction in Refugee Camp

THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUES

Baptists in BWA Bilateral Dialogues

Callam Names BWA Team for Dialogue with Pentecostals

IN MEMORIAM

BOOK NOTES

COVER PHOTO

King James I of England and early Baptist Thomas Helwys are pictured with Helwys’ letter to the King. Based on scripture, Helwys challenged the King’s claim of divine power.

Unless otherwise noted, photos in the issue are by BWA staff.
Recently, I shared in a discussion with two incisive thinkers on the subject of the place of parliamentary procedures in meetings of church organizations. This discussion was against the background of a statement outlining the rules that should guide discussions at meetings of a Christian World Communion.

Some people agree to follow a standard book of procedures that has been sanctioned by years of use in their cultural context. They believe such procedures contribute to the preservation of order in their church meetings. Yet, this solution is inadequate for a worldwide organization whose members utilize a plethora of traditional books defining parliamentary procedures developed in certain specific contexts. Hardly can one justifiably assert that the procedures enshrined in a text that is used in one area of a worldwide constituency should apply in discussions involving people who are accustomed to operate on the basis of significantly different guidelines officially sanctioned in their cultural context. There appears not to be any easy way of resolving the question of how to frame parliamentary procedures that are satisfactory to all discussants in an ecclesial gathering of people from diverse contexts.

When the subject of parliamentary procedures is under consideration, another issue arises. This concerns the appropriateness of using books of rules to regulate discussions in church settings if these books are not predicated on biblical or theological principles. The answer one supplies will have much to do with how one understands the nature and meaning of what we may identify simply as church meetings.

Whatever else they are, church meetings are occasions when followers of Christ gather with an intention to discern together what they consider to be the will of God in relation to any matter that forms the subject of their deliberation.

Churches and ecclesial organizations are not governed by procedures adopted in the parliaments of this world. Their meetings are not carefully designed processes aimed at discovering what the majority of those in attendance believe the church should do. Church meetings are not opportunities for participants to use persuasion to influence the members assembled to adopt this or that position. Instead, meetings of ecclesial organizations are worship events in which participants both speak and listen to each other as they strive to discover together what the Lord may be leading them to do. When they hold decision meetings, Christians in a church family seek to discover together the road the Holy Spirit is leading them to take as they seek to be faithful in ministry.

Understood in this perspective, when proposals are presented at church meetings – and these proposals are sometimes called motions – no desire exists to deliberately mute the voice of any of those present, whether or not they appear to be in support of a particular motion. Participants are expected to share what they believe they are hearing from the Lord. They are to contribute to the deliberations what they are led to discern regarding the issues under consideration. And they are expected to be as eager to graciously voice their point of view as to listen carefully to the opinion of others.

What should result from this process of praying, listening and sharing is a consensus around which members are able to unite not because every single one of them agrees entirely with the decision proposed, but because they each find enough in the decision that they and their fellow followers of Christ can affirm together.

Who doesn’t long for better church meetings?
Dear Partners, brothers and sisters in the faith:

Greetings from Goma.

Through the media you certainly have been informed about the resumption of hostilities in the two provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu [in the Democratic Republic of Congo]. You may remember that a few years ago after waging war against the Congolese army with all the consequences that it entailed in our area, Nkunda, the military officer [who led the rebel faction], was arrested thanks to cooperation between the Rwandan and Congolese armies. Besides the cooperation between the two armies, a split within Nkunda’s movement brought a high ranking officer with the name of Bosco Ntaganda to switch to the government side and he was offered a high position in the national army. But, there was a strong reaction from the international community toward the Congolese government because Ntaganda was on the list of the people wanted by the International Court in Hague for crimes against humanity. Over the past few years, the Congolese have refused to deliver him to the International Court, arguing that this could exacerbate the security situation in Eastern Congo, especially in the North Kivu and South Kivu provinces.

But in reality, Ntaganda has been more of a disturbing factor than a guarantee for peace in our area. He even has been suspected of illegal exploitation and smuggling of minerals. Just some time ago he convinced most of the soldiers of his ethnic group to defect from the national army and create a new rebel movement. Some of the soldiers loyal to him have returned to the regular army, but he still has enough fighters on his side. They have occupied a relatively large area in the Masisi and Walikale territories. Other territories like Rutshuru and Lubero are also affected because Ntaganda allied himself with local militias and even with Rwandan rebels who in the near past were his enemies.

As a result of fighting between the regular army and Ntaganda’s faction, thousands of people have now fled from their villages and are wandering all over with small children and without immediate help. An international humanitarian organization spoke of around two million displaced people in the two provinces of North and South Kivu since January this year. Many of our congregations in the areas concerned by the fighting are affected. Some have fled to remote congregations of ours which now have difficulties taking care of them. Before yesterday (May 6), 47 wounded civilians and soldiers were brought to our Bethesda Hospital in Goma and the doctor in chief there says that 10 more are waiting and surely many others will follow.

As you have been doing in the past, we again ask you to remember us in your prayers. Because in the past we always felt ourselves to be within a communion of brothers and sisters in the faith who prayed for us, we were able to come this far without losing hope. Even though we here in the city of Goma are not directly affected by the hostilities, except for the shortages of foodstuff, we feel very much the burden of powerlessness to do something to help so many people, among whom are exhausted and overloaded women with belongings and small traumatized children who can hardly walk. We try to dialogue with the local government to see how to help the situation, but the fact that the new national government has not yet been sworn in after the elections is a big handicap for us. However we hope this will happen in the near future and the international community should work more closely with the new government to bring Ntaganda to court. Even though bringing him to the International Court for trial may not be the final solution to instability in our area, it should at least be a strong message to those who have caused so much suffering to innocent local populations.

Greetings to all of you,

Kakule Molo
President
Baptist Community in Central Africa
May 7, 2012

Kakule Molo (in the front), president of the Baptist Community in Central Africa, at the Nzulo Camp in the DRC
Photo courtesy of the World Council of Churches
Caribbean Baptist immigrants have difficulty fitting into Baptist churches in the United States. This was discussed at a recent conference of Caribbean immigrants in New York City.

The April National Gathering of Caribbean Diaspora Baptist clergy, leaders and churches was billed as “a missional event to acknowledge and initiate discussion on the emergence, contribution and role of Baptists in the continuum of the Caribbean Diaspora.”

A common theme expressed by Caribbean immigrants at the conference was the difficulty to find a “church home” upon migrating into the US. Raymond Anglin, a general secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) during the 1980s and the son of a Baptist pastor, stated that he “experienced a kind of culture shock upon moving to the United States.” The Baptist churches he encountered in Florida and Georgia were “different from my experience in Jamaica in terms of authority, leadership, the attitude to and role of women, and in understanding of training.”

Anglin, who says he now “has a fulfilling ministry as a Presbyterian pastor,” indicated that his background in Jamaica prepared him for his current situation, as it “gave him an ecumenical dimension of ministry.”

Delroy Murdock, pastor of a United Methodist Church in New York and a former Baptist pastor from Jamaica, said that, upon coming to the US, he “could not find a Baptist church that looked anything like those in Jamaica.” Edward Jenkins, another Methodist pastor in New York who was a Baptist pastor in the Caribbean, said that he sees himself “as a Baptist in a Methodist church.”

Banmattie Ram, a Baptist pastor from Guyana, said most of the Baptist churches she encountered in the US “were different from my experience in the Caribbean,” but stated that “one must do ministry wherever one is.”

Karl Johnson, general secretary of the JBU, said that the JBU is currently exploring ways of engaging in mission with Baptists in the Diaspora. He acknowledged that “the JBU has not grasped the opportunity presented by Caribbean people in the Diaspora.” He said that the JBU had “dropped the ball and needed to repent and return to a mission consciousness.”

Everton Jackson, Baptist World Alliance regional secretary for the Caribbean and executive secretary/treasurer of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF), said that “there are tremendous possibilities for cooperation between CBF and the...
Caribbean Diaspora churches.” This is possible, he said, because Caribbean people, whether in the Caribbean or elsewhere, “share a common history” as well as “common needs for affirmation, self actualization, [and] a theology that speaks to our context.”

Jackson informed participants at the conference that the CBF has plans to enter into collaboration with the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) to establish a Centre for Caribbean Baptist Studies at the institution. The UTCWI, an ecumenical college that is part of the University of the West Indies, the main university in the English-speaking Caribbean, trains many of the Caribbean Baptist pastors.

Eron Henry, associate director of communications for the BWA, indicated that Caribbean Baptists in general, including those in the Diaspora, have played important roles in the BWA and have held significant positions within the international Baptist organization.

Henry made special mention of current BWA General Secretary Neville Callam, Caribbean Baptists who are BWA vice presidents, and those who sit on committees and commissions of the BWA.

Delroy Reid-Salmon, president of the Caribbean Diaspora Baptist Clergy Association, which convened the conference, announced that his group is spearheading the establishment of a chair in the name of Horace Russell at the UTCWI. Russell was president of the school in the 1970s and later became a vice president and professor of historical theology at Palmer Theological Seminary near Philadelphia in the US.

Samuel Simpson, a Jamaican immigrant to the US, was honored for helping to pioneer the formation of Baptist churches that ministered to Caribbean immigrants in New York City beginning in the 1960s. He recently retired as pastor of the Bronx and Wake Eden Baptist churches, two of the churches he founded.

There were 400 women that participated in the two-day conference. The conference included inspirational and challenging messages, as well as artistic presentations. There were 140 musicians that participated. There was a choir, orchestra, instrumental groups, and worship groups.

Bishop Ion Miron preached about the perfect model servant, Jesus Christ. Patsy Davis, executive director of the BWA Women’s Department, challenged the women to use Jesus as an example of servant hood and do likewise. Livija Godina, president of the European Baptist Women’s Union, shared how love is the motivation of Jesus Christ and should be the same for everyone.

The Moldovan Baptist women have a special partnership with the Baptist women.

(Continued on next page)
of Brazil. Sister Eugenia visited Brazil last year, and three sisters from Brazil participated in the conference. The three Baptist women from Brazil were Lucia Margarida Pereira de Brito, executive director of the Baptist Women’s Missionary Union of Brazil; Elza Sant’Anna do Valle Andrade, national coordinator of the Brazil Women’s Department; and Maria Bernadete da Silva, executive director of CIEM (mission school). Each one shared a different part of what it means to serve and how best to serve.

A highlight of the event was Olga Mocan’s PowerPoint presentation of the 20-year history of women’s ministry in Moldova. Sister Olga was the one whom God set apart to begin the women’s ministry in Moldova 20 years ago. It was a very difficult time in the history of the country, but Sister Olga followed God’s will and began the women’s ministry. The Baptist Union of Moldova led by Bishop Ion Miron recognized Sister Olga with a beautiful plaque and other special remembrances for leading the Baptist women of Moldova for 20 years.

After the conference there were two regional meetings held in two different villages. The theme for the two meetings was “The Power of Hope.” On April 19 in the village of Hancesti, 130 women participated in a special worship service led by the invited guest. On April 30 in the village of Cahul, 250 women participated, as well as a choir and orchestra of 140 people. The Lord was honored and praised at both regional meetings.
Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary Neville Callam called on Baptists in Latin America to exercise holistic ministry within their communities and countries.

Addressing the Union of Baptists in Latin America (UBLA) congress that was held in Asuncion, Paraguay, in April, Callam explained that focusing on meeting people’s social needs should not be understood as a distraction from the church’s evangelistic ministry.

The BWA leader urged delegates and participants to appreciate the transformational effects of Gospel proclamation, noting that it has both personal and social dimensions. Callam emphasized that while Jesus transforms individuals, Christ also transforms structures that perpetuate injustice in society.

BWA Director of Freedom and Justice, Raimundo Barreto, challenged delegates and participants at the congress to respond to the divine mandate to love and practice justice, and to give witness to God’s love through actions in the wider community. He asserted that the principle of separation of church and state can no longer justify a separation of church and society.

Barreto reminded Baptists in Latin America that there are important themes in the area of freedom and justice that have been overlooked by governments and civil authorities in Latin America. He urged Latin American churches to raise their prophetic voices to remind those authorities that there is a God who loves justice and demands just relationships among human beings.

Fausto Vasconcelos, director of the BWA Division of Mission, Evangelism and Theological Reflection (METR), also attended and reflected on the BWA historical commitment to evangelism. He informed the gathering of the Jesus Christ, Bread of Life strategy, the current evangelism training program of the BWA. Vasconcelos called upon Latin American Baptists to integrate the motto and the concepts of Jesus Christ, Bread of Life into their ongoing programs of evangelism.

**Latin Americans Elect Leaders**

At an assembly convened immediately after the congress, UBLA elected José Parrish Jácome Hernandez from Ecuador as its new general secretary. The new leader for Latin American Baptists has had a long association with UBLA, and was vice president before being chosen as UBLA’s general secretary. He was president of the Ecuadorian Baptist Convention for five years, from 1997-2002, and has served as dean of the Ecuador Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been senior pastor, along with his wife, Toyi, of Israel Baptist Church since 2004, after having served other congregations in Ecuador.

He holds a doctoral degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, in the United States, a master’s degree from the South American Seminary in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, and a degree in economics from the University of Guayaquil.

He succeeds Alberto Prokopchuk of Argentina, who did not seek re-election to the position. The congress made expressions of thanks to Prokopchuk, who was UBLA general secretary and BWA regional secretary for Latin America for 11 years.

Ivan Martinez of Venezuela was re-elected to another term as UBLA president.

Hundreds of Latin American Baptists attended the congress of UBLA that was held in Asuncion, Paraguay, while leaders of conventions, unions, and other delegates participated in the assembly that held elections along with other decision meetings. The meetings ran from April 19-21 at the Conmebol Convention Center.

Below left: Fausto Vasconcellos, 1st left, Neville Callam, 3rd left, and Raimundo Baretto, 1st right, with leaders of the National Baptist Convention of Brazil

Below: A Paraguay church group presents a liturgical dance during the UBLA congress
Baptist World Alliance President John Upton led a Baptist delegation, which included Hans Guderian, president of the European Baptist Federation, in a meeting with Kirill I, Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, on March 29.

Kirill I, who was enthroned in 2009, is the second consecutive Russian Orthodox Patriarch to meet with a BWA leader. BWA General Secretary Neville Callam met with Kirill’s predecessor, Alexius II, in June 2008, where Callam expressed a desire for stronger relations between Baptists and the Russian Orthodox Church, and appealed for a continuation of the Orthodox-Baptist consultations on moral values.

Kirill I indicated that despite theological differences, there are a number of issues on which both Baptists and Orthodox Christians in Russia agree. He expressed concerns on issues of morality, marriage and the family, as well as relativism, which tends to reject normative truth.

Upton thanked the patriarch for his firm position on the unalterable truth of the Gospel. The BWA president said that in a world in which fundamental principles are subject to erosion, the trusted biblical witness of good and evil, Christian hope and of marriage and family must be affirmed.

Both Upton and Guderian said they hoped that conversations between Baptist and Orthodox believers in Russia would extend to a dialogue between the BWA and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Other members of the delegation hosted at the Moscow Patriarchate were Aleksey Smirnov, president of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists; Vyacheslav Nesteruk, president of the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists; and Victor Krutsko, president of the Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists of Belarus.

While in Moscow, Upton also participated in a number of other meetings, including the annual conference of the Euro-Asiatic Federation of Unions of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and the 12th National Prayer Breakfast where about 200 participants from the Christian, political and business communities attended.

Approximately 60 participants from Baptist unions of the countries of the former Soviet Union such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Belarus, were at the Euro-Asiatic Federation meetings at the Moscow Theological Seminary. Delegates were encouraged to become more involved in the life of the Baptist community worldwide.
INTRODUCTION

We do not know much about the life of Thomas Helwys. Neither the date of his birth, possibly in the 1570s, nor that of his death, probably in Newgate prison around 1615, are certain. We know that he was born and lived as an English gentleman in Nottinghamshire and trained as a lawyer, but there are periods of his life about which we know nothing. But two factors have assured Helwys’ place in the history of Baptists around the world, and in the history of religious toleration and religious freedom. The first is that Helwys together with John Smyth were leaders of the earliest Baptist church begun in exile in Amsterdam in 1609, and Helwys went on to found the first Baptist church in England, in Spitalfields in London, exactly 400 years ago in 1612. So Helwys is the original Baptist pioneer.

The second factor is that in the middle of a rather polemical book attacking nearly every other religious group in England at that time, Helwys made what is usually considered to be the first plea for universal religious freedom in the English language, and since then religious freedom for all, not just themselves, has been a core conviction of Baptists in every part of the world. It is this second aspect on which I want to focus in this paper.

THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Thomas Helwys was born into the age of English Queen Elizabeth I who had achieved the final settlement of the Church of England as the State Church established by law, which allowed for no other lawful religion. During her reign came the growth of Puritanism, which as its name implies ought to “purify” the State Church by recalling it to what the Puritans saw as the authentic biblical faith. They wanted limits set on the power of the bishops and a greater place given to preaching. The more radical of the Puritans became so disillusioned with the Church of England that they separated from it completely to form their own congregations, on the basis of a covenant. These Separatists, as they were called, included among their number John Smyth, who had been trained as an Anglican clergyman, and Thomas Helwys, then a lawyer and a member of the English gentry, who joined Smyth’s Separatist congregation in Lincolnshire in east England.

When King James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth I as King James I of England, there were high hopes among the Separatists that James, coming from Presbyterian Scotland, might allow some kind of religious toleration in England. These high hopes were dashed at the Hampton Court Conference of 1603 in which, although James conceded some moderate Puritan demands, he re-affirmed conformity with the Church of England as the only religious option.

(Continued on next page)
Persecution against Separatists increased and this resulted in the Separatist congregation led by John Smyth, which included Thomas Helwys, escaping to Amsterdam around 1608. Amsterdam was a free city practicing religious toleration, and it had already received a number of separatist-type groups. It was here that the Separatist congregation led by John Smyth adopted what we see now as a Baptist way of being the church.

Helwys and Smyth had serious theological disagreements and agreed to separate. Smyth’s church applied to join the Mennonites and Helwys returned to England to start the first Baptist church on English soil, at Spitalfields in London.

HELWYS’ PLEA FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Helwys’ plea for religious freedom is truly remarkable because nobody was really discussing it at that time in England. It is important to see that someone putting this forward in that context would not only be guilty of spreading dangerous religious ideas, but would be seen as threatening the security of the state.

King James believed in his “divine right” to rule his subjects, including determining their religion. So it is indeed remarkable that in the midst of Helwys’ polemical book comes this unqualified plea for religious freedom: “Let them be heretics, Jews or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.”

HELWYS’ LEGACY

The historian John Coffey, from his study of 17th century religious life in England, has identified three “political visions” that Baptists have adopted in their history on this question of religious freedom and its limits. The first is what he calls a radical separationist view, as espoused by Helwys and Roger Williams. The state is a purely civil institution and “its purpose is not to promote a particular faith but to govern and order a multi-faith society, in which Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, pagans and even atheists enjoy the full rights of citizenship and dwell together in peace.” Coffey estimates that this position has only been held by a minority of Baptists over the centuries.

King James believed in his “divine right” to rule his subjects, including determining their religion.
The second political vision is of a theocratic apocalypticism with very little religious tolerance, as espoused by the Fifth Monarchists of the 17th century. Believing that God was about to establish his millennial kingdom on earth accompanied by the rule of the saints, they wanted to move quickly from pluralism to unity with no room for religious diversity. Only a minority of Baptists have ever been attracted to this, but Coffey concludes, “Insofar as there are Baptists today who endorse the theocratic blueprint of Christian reconstructionism, a movement partly inspired by dreams of the millennium, this second vision survives.”

But Coffey sees the greatest proportion of Baptists as being firm upholders of what he calls the “Christian nation” position, with its assumption that Christianity should be at the heart of the political nation. The holders of this view “have not been averse to supporting systematic discrimination against ‘outsiders’ who did not share the orthodox Protestant faith.” It is not difficult to see how this has worked out in different ways in the concepts of “Christian England” or “Christian America.” I believe that in England it has led to some reluctance of Baptists to be true to their roots in full religious freedom because there are times when they have been very happy to hang onto the coat tails of the Established Church of England in its more ready access to the State on crucial issues.

Each of these positions leads to a different view of religious freedom and its limits. The first allows full religious freedom, and encourages dialogue about the collective morality of a society, but begs the question about how and where that moral consensus is to be achieved. The second is hardly tolerant at all of other religious beliefs and practices because of its imminent expectation of the full establishment of the Kingdom of God. The third tries to see everything through a consensus around the concept of a Christian society – a consensus that may be more wishfully imagined than real, and its proponents might use it to discriminate against divergent religious views, especially of other faiths.

So despite our Baptist rhetoric on this issue, if we are to accept Coffey’s thesis, the outworking of our Baptist commitment to religious freedom is not as straightforward as it might first appear. And I believe that is still the case today.

Anthony Peck is BWA regional secretary for Europe and general secretary of the European Baptist Federation. This is an excerpt from a lecture delivered at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic.

2 op.cit., 2 p 34
3 op.cit., p 35
A shared understanding of the common good that includes a concern for the freedom of individuals to pursue not only their own interests, but also the well being of others, is important in the practice of religious freedom in a multi-cultural context.

These claims were made by Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam in a lecture he delivered in the Dominican Republic in April.

Callam, who spoke on the topic, “Secularism and Religious Freedom: Conflict or Partnership?” addressed the contribution of Baptists to the defense of religious liberty at the 7th World Congress of the International Religious Liberty Association in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, from April 24-26.

The resolution of the tension between religious liberty and secularism is more easily described than achieved, Callam stated. “In the coming decades, the extent to which a comprehensive and satisfactory answer to this dilemma is found will determine both the sustainability of people’s peaceful co-existence and the possibility of religious liberty remaining a human right to be respected by all,” he said.

Callam drew on the works of two Baptist thinkers, John Coffey from the United Kingdom and Burchell Taylor, a BWA vice president, who is from Jamaica. Callam affirmed Coffey’s characterization of Baptist attitudes as “three distinct political visions:” a radical separation of church and state; “a theocratic apocalypticism” that reflects a radical anticipation of the imminence of the parousia; and an adoption of the so-called “Christian nation” option without necessarily accommodating hostility toward people of other faiths or of no faith at all.

Callam felt that Taylor’s proposal for a secure religious liberty within a multi-cultural, multi-religious, pluralistic context “is another way of characterizing the convergence of religious liberty and hostile secularism.”

Taylor, he said, advocates for a “just and peaceful coexistence of diverse populations within a single nation state,” and for the development of what he refers to as a vision of “the responsible society” that is “free for all.” This vision is predicated on the assumption that “it is in community that our humanity finds its true fulfillment.” This requires the adoption of a shared understanding of the common good, and an agreement on the right of all to participate in the life of the society based on “the fundamental fact of human dignity and self-worth.”

This position allows Christians to hold to their own worldview and to practice their religion while respecting the rights of, and making room for, people of other or of no faith to enjoy the same benefit. The vision of this “free for all” responsible society, Callam emphasized, “does not require the adoption of a Christian nation philosophy, and it allows individual religious autonomy to thrive in the context of a socially negotiated consensus.” It is “characterized by a careful retention of a Christian worldview at the personal level, without affirming the ‘Christian nation’ option.”

Callam asserts that Taylor’s vision is what “characterizes many sections of the worldwide Baptist community.” This, according to Callam, is what undergirded the Baptist response to the letter written by 138 Muslim scholars to the broader Christian community in 2007. The response states, among other things, “[W]e understand ‘common ground’ to mean that [the] double command to love opens up a space or area (‘ground’) in which we can live together, talk with each other, share our experiences, work together to enable the flourishing of human life and explore the eternal truths to which our respective faiths bear witness.”

The BWA’s Historical Commitment to Religious Liberty

By Raimundo Barreto

There is much biblical evidence that points to a mandate of responsibility to the world and for people in their social and environmental context. The Hebrew prophets are clear examples that we are called to be the divine voice of indignation when injustice and oppression are prevalent. The church has the gift of divine prophecy, and therefore should reflect divine indignation against all types of injustice.

There was a time when some Baptists used the principle of separation of church and state to promote a separation of church and society. This confusion is not justified at the present time. As Baptists, we passionately defend the separation of church and state and religious freedom. But we realize that we can only be salt and light in the world if we actively participate in social life, and if we get involved in peoples’ struggles and problems, as we get immersed in the world. As the Lord Jesus said in his priestly prayer, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one” (John 17:15).

The struggle for religious freedom in the work of people like Thomas Helwys, Roger Williams and many others was an important element in shaping the Baptist vision. As Thorwald Lorenzen, a Baptist theologian and former chair of the BWA Commission on Human Rights, said, “Given the importance of freedom and justice, primarily in the form of struggle for religious liberty at the genesis and in the trajectory of the Baptist movement…the struggle for freedom and justice has been an important part in the shaping of the Baptist World Alliance.”

Since its inception in 1905, the BWA has been a prophetic voice in the world, expressing concerns and making statements on important and critical situations. During the Baptist World Congress in Berlin, Germany, in 1934, the BWA strongly condemned racism “as a violation of the law of God,” specifically highlighting, “oppression and unfair discrimination towards Jews [and] to people of color.” Moreover, the BWA also condemned governments’ interference in the church.

In 1947 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the conference theme was “The World Responsibility of Baptists,” with several sessions discussing the world situation and the consequences of war. Support was also provided to the United Nations (UN), supporting its struggle “to win the peace.”

In 1950 in Cleveland in the United States, an additional religious freedom manifesto was proclaimed. The BWA expressed support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on Genocide. A further resolution against racism was adopted, with special reference to “discrimination against Jews, African Americans and the situation of apartheid in South Africa.”

Over the years, the BWA has spoken on issues of religious freedom and human rights, world peace and nuclear disarmament, world hunger, refugees, and ecology, among others. These statements have also been followed by actions such as relief and development, and international initiatives in defending the rights of the persecuted and oppressed.

In 1974, the BWA received special consultative status with ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, an instrument that offers more room for prophetic participation in the international context.

In 2008, the BWA created a division to specifically address issues of justice and freedom. Through the Division of Freedom and Justice, the BWA promotes respect for human rights, especially religious freedom, and due regard for justice in human relations and values rooted in the Bible and therefore the faith of the church.

We work with a five-year emphasis, following the theme of the 2010 Baptist World Congress, In Step with the Spirit. Each year there is a secondary issue with a particular emphasis. In 2011-2012, our emphasis is on proclamation, and the F&J division has interpreted this focus through the lens of religious freedom.

2012 is the 400th anniversary of the publication of Baptist pioneer and founder Thomas Helwys’ book, A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity, one of the first defenses of religious freedom in the Western world. Religious freedom, therefore, has been the central focus of our program throughout the year.

Raimundo Barreto is the director of the BWA Division of Freedom and Justice. This article contains excerpts from a presentation made in Asuncion, Paraguay, in April.
The Baptist World Alliance was formed in 1905 and, from the outset, advocated for human rights and, in particular, religious freedom. A review of resolutions passed by the BWA over the past 30 years provides testimony of this longstanding commitment to religious liberty, both in general terms and in specific instances.

In 1985, the BWA noted with horror “that there have been more Christian martyrs in this century (20th century) than in any previous one.” Many Christians, it observed, “face severe restrictions and harassment which prevent freedom of worship and witness,” and that “some endure long, harsh imprisonment, exile and torture for their faith.” Baptists were urged “to become more informed about the circumstances of other believers,” to pray, and “act in every way possible” for those Christians who suffer persecution.

A 1994 resolution “views with alarm the denial of the right of religious liberty to minority groups in countries such as Bulgaria, Albania, Iran, China, Indonesia and Egypt” and called upon “member bodies to explore every opportunity to secure religious liberty for all.”

In 2001, the BWA lamented that “religiously motivated conflict between peoples of different faiths is escalating around the world,” and noted “the pain and suffering of Baptists and other individuals amidst situations of religiously motivated conflicts.” In addition to urging prayer for these victims, Baptists were encouraged to put in place reconciliation initiatives and to “reach out to people of all faiths in humanitarian fashion... recognizing that people of all faiths have the right to religious liberty and other freedoms.”

The BWA saw the need to raise the matter of religious freedom again in 2003 when it affirmed that “one of the basic rights of each human being is the right to worship openly and freely according to the dictates of one’s own heart.” The BWA regretted that “this basic right is denied in many countries and areas of the world where governmental authorities, entrenched religious hierarchies, mob rule and other forces persecute individuals who seek to exercise their basic rights.” The BWA encouraged those churches that “enjoy religious freedom to stand with the churches of countries where religious freedom is denied or limited” and to call the attention of these countries’ governments and the international community “to the plight of persecuted churches.”

The most recent resolution on religious freedom was in 2011 in which the BWA expressed its belief that “every individual should have the right to worship without government interference or restriction” and that “each individual should have the freedom to join like-minded groups to express his/her religious beliefs.” The international Baptist organization lauded each country in the world “that guarantees its citizens and others the freedom to worship, to gather peacefully with others of like belief, and to educate themselves in their religious beliefs without interference or restriction.”

There were instances in which the BWA named specific countries as serious violators of religious freedom. A 1987 resolution, which grew out of a 1986 BWA visit to China, invited its member organizations “to use every opportunity open to them to advocate and defend the proper freedom and human rights of religious and racial minorities so that multi-racial and multi-religious communities can live in harmony and all may contribute positively to the good of their society.”

In that same resolution, informed by a meeting in Amman, Jordan, the BWA expressed “our appreciation of the way in which the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan practices religious toleration, thus enabling members of different religions to enjoy peaceful co-existence” and offered a prayer that Jordan “may be an instrument of just and lasting peace in the Middle East.”

In 2009, the BWA expressed “deep concern over the lack of religious freedom in Azerbaijan” through the passage of a new religion law that limited religious freedom. It requested the country’s government to submit the law to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe “for evaluation in order to bring the law into conformity with international standards.”

From the outset the BWA advocated for human rights, in particular religious freedom.

Noted that there are more Christian martyrs in the 20th century than in any previous one.

BWA members were invited to advocate and defend the freedom and human rights of religious and racial minorities.

BWA viewed with alarm the denial of the right of religious liberty to minority groups.

Lamented escalation of religiously motivated conflict & encouraged reconciliation initiatives.

Affirmed the right to worship openly and freely & encouraged churches to call attention to the plight of persecuted churches.

Expressed concern over the lack of religious freedom in Azerbaijan & requested evaluation.

Expressed its belief that every individual should have the right to worship without government interference or restriction.
In reviewing the recommendations that were made to Pakistan in the last Universal Periodic Review cycle, the BWA wants to highlight that despite all of the recommendations and the positive responses from the country to most of those recommendations in the past cycle, the status of freedom of religion and belief in Pakistan has deteriorated more recently, increasing our concern.

The killings of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer and Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti, well known opponents of anti-blasphemy laws, and the increasing number of attacks against different religious minorities since then, are undisputed facts that speak of the deteriorating situation of religious freedom in Pakistan and require a stronger response on the part of its government to the demands of freedom of religion and belief in the country.

The exploitation, violence and persecution against religious minorities are on an increasing curve across the country, imposing constant threats to the fundamental rights of the non-Muslim citizens of Pakistan. Religiously based discrimination has taken many forms in Pakistan in recent years: extra judicial killings, enforced disappearances, violence against women, misuse of blasphemy laws, injustices at the workplace against non-Muslims and attacks on places of worships. All these forms of violence are alarming and can potentially threaten peace and security.

While many of the articles within the Pakistan Constitution are geared toward creating a solid framework for universal human rights and a balanced and fair system, the government which enforces the articles and the Shariat Court system it relies on are known for developing amendments and countermanding reforms that violate the rights of minorities and in turn protect the violators that perpetuate internal intolerance.

Whereas Article 13 of the Constitution of Pakistan is clear about the rights and interest of minorities, apparently no laws have been enacted for its effective implementation. Those belonging to religious minorities continue to see themselves as second class citizens. Citizens belonging to other faiths, like a Pakistani Christian pastor who prefers not to be identified has affirmed, “are systematically excluded and relegated to a secondary position.”

There are several examples of the judiciary where judges of the superior courts have favored the religious extremists. In 2000, Lahore High Court Judge Mr. Justice Nazir Akhtar publicly stated that anyone accused of blasphemy should be killed on the spot by Muslims as a religious obligation (swab). He further remarked that there was no need for any legal proceedings for a blasphemer. Although the statement was subsequently retracted, it indicated the extent of judicial bias on the subject. Other reports suggest that cases are prosecuted because of “unsubstantiated oral testimony of the complainants where statements are taken out of context” (SSCMP, 2010).

According to a Christian nonprofit organization in Pakistan we talked with, a combination of policies from the legislative and the executive powers have weighed heavily against religious minorities. These initiatives strengthen the hands of Islamist extremist activists. Furthermore, they also find accessible mechanisms through the court system to override rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Anti-blasphemy laws are often used to terrorize religious minorities and guarantee conformity. There have been repeated accusations of abuse and violence occurring throughout Pakistan because of these laws. Working with local NGOs and individuals, the BWA has documented 46 cases of individuals that have been jailed in 2011 on the basis of these blasphemy laws.

In the same line as other organizations such as the World Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches in Pakistan, the Baptist World Alliance respects the particularities of each country, region and culture, which must be given breadth to generate understanding. However it also recognizes that these aforementioned incidents, which have repeatedly taken place in Pakistan in recent times, indicate the continuation of human rights violations behind the veil of a traditional infrastructure. There must be an increased effort on the part of the Pakistan government to create and enforce policy which safeguards the human rights of all its citizens including marginalized minorities. These measures should ensure equal status for all citizens before the law and protect the rights of all individuals within both religious majority and minority groups.

The BWA concurs that Pakistan must be urged to enforce the human rights guarantees secured by its own constitution, and align its laws, particularly those regarding blasphemy and
Callam Raises Religious Freedom Concerns with US Secretary of State

There is a growing concern that the “greatest victim” of the Arab Spring will be religious freedom. This was stated by Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam in a letter to United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The BWA leader provided a list of grievances to the American Secretary of State. Referring specially to Egypt, Callam said the BWA received reports from Baptists in Egypt that “violence targeting Christian minorities increased significantly in the past year, and that it has been tolerated by the Egyptian transitional government.” He explained that Christians “feel terribly vulnerable and neglected” and now “fear for their future.”

Callam told Clinton that in Egypt a number of churches have been closed while others have been converted into mosques. This transpired after the Supreme Council of Armed Forces requested that all Christian groups reveal all underground house churches for the purpose of granting them necessary permits to operate legally in Egypt. However, the list of churches was made public and Muslim fundamentalist groups, especially in rural communities, moved to close the churches while turning others into mosques.

Christian communities are being terrorized, Callam said. Kidnapping of Christians is on the increase, especially kidnappings of women, who are being forced into marriage with Muslims. He urged that the US make provisions and protections for human and religious rights “a crucial controlling factor” in any negotiations, pact, or agreements entered into with countries in the Middle East and North Africa, including financial assistance and economic support. He appealed to the US government “to raise these concerns coming from religious minorities” with governments in the region.

Callam reiterated that “in order for peace and stability to become a reality in the region, special attention needs to be given to religious freedom.” He observed that a number of countries in North Africa and the Middle East are in the process of rewriting their constitutions and electing new leadership, making this an opportune time “when they can cement religious freedom as an integral part of the new regimes.”

Claiming that Baptists are peaceful and law-abiding citizens, he asserted that they “want to live in peace with their Muslim neighbors,” while having the freedom to practice their own faith.

There are approximately 50,000 Baptists in the Middle East and North Africa who hold membership in BWA member bodies, with approximately 2,100 members in the Egyptian Baptist Convention.

Religious Freedom Violations in Pakistan continued

the Ahmadis, members of an Islamic reformist movement, with international human rights standards. The Human Rights Council has the opportunity to take a proactive role by ensuring that the Universal Periodic Review recommendations are drawn up in a manner that reflects the universal human rights in which each person, of any faith or no faith at all, would have the right to respectfully search for truth and justice in accord with their own conscience.
Christian unity may require rethinking the use of the language of ethnicity, said Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam, at a lecture in Texas in the United States.

Callam, who delivered the annual T. B. Maston Lectures in Christian Ethics at Hardin-Simmons University’s (HSU) Logsdon Theological Seminary in Abilene, Texas, in April, argued that “terms like ‘ethnic’ or ‘ethnicity’ are not as unproblematic as some may think.”

In his first lecture, titled *Ethnicity: Establishing Borders of Exclusion*, Callam identified three principal understandings of ethnicity and suggested that terms such as “ethnic” and “ethnicity” may be understood as mythical concepts that play a major role in social differentiation, and may actually be used to promote negative stereotypes.

While the concept of “ethnic churches” is not used in the same way by all those who adopt the term, it appears that “[the] designation is reserved for churches formed by immigrant people or for persons deemed to be minorities in their residential context,” Callam said. Callam asked that care be taken in the use of the language of ethnicity and offered suggestions on how this can be achieved.

In his second lecture, entitled *Communion: Celebrating Inclusive Community*, Callam posited that Holy Communion is a community meal that potentially can overcome boundaries that Christians construct through the use of ethnic categories.

The meaning of Holy Communion as a community-defining and solidarity-conferring meal, he said, “implies that Christians need to deconstruct their understanding of ethnicity in order to enable the acknowledgement of our common bond in Christ Jesus.” In this way, he continued, “the Lord’s Supper will be a celebration of grace, a banquet of love, and a festival of solidarity.”

The T. B. Maston Lectures in Christian Ethics is an annual lecture series presented by Logsdon Seminary and The Logsdon School of Theology of HSU. The lectures seek to honor the legacy of Dr. T.B. Maston, longtime professor of Christian ethics and pioneering Baptist ethicist, known for his writing and teaching in the areas of biblical ethics, race relations, family life, church and state, and character formation.

Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam has praised leaders of the Baptist Convention of Kenya (BCOK) for the courageous actions they took during a recent meeting at their national church office in Nairobi. After years of conflict and division, the leaders decided it was time to take decisive action to turn the corner on their difficulties.

The parties attending the meeting drafted and signed a letter to the Kenyan Registrar of Societies withdrawing charges they had made against each other. In addition, action was taken to bring to an end legal action that had commenced against specific leaders in the convention.

The process toward reconciliation included a marathon meeting involving leaders of the BCOK, the All Africa Baptist Fellowship (AABF), and the BWA. In their follow up to this meeting, Paul Msiza and Harrison Olan’g, former AABF president and general secretary, respectively, traveled to Kenya for further discussions with the wider Kenya Baptist family. After his election to the presidency of AABF, Michael Okwakol from Uganda continued to press for reconciliation among Baptists in Kenya.

At the recent Nairobi meeting in March, Callam was joined by Okwakol and together they witnessed the major step in the reconciliation process. Apart from the action taken to remove major obstacles to peace in the convention by, among other things, discontinuing legal actions, encouragement was given by Callam to the team that continues to work on the revision of the BCOK constitution. In addition, consideration has been given to initiatives that will be taken as a prelude to a General Assembly at which BCOK will choose its leaders.

Callam has appealed for prayers for all who are seeking to complete the process of reconciliation, especially Daniel Thiieri, Julius Mbagaya and Shem Okello.
Teams participating in bilateral dialogues at the international level must reflect the diversity of the Christian world.

CALLAM CALLS FOR Balanced Representation in International Dialogues

At the Forum on Bilateral Dialogues held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam said the composition of teams participating in bilateral dialogues at the international level must reflect the diversity of the Christian world.

Callam made the remarks on March 10 at the Forum where he represented both the BWA and the Committee of Secretaries of Christian World Communion. He was chosen for this task when the group of international church leaders met last October in their annual meeting in Silver Spring, Maryland, in the United States.

The BWA leader said “attention needs to be paid to the relative strength of representation from the Global North and the Global South.” He also called for the agenda of bilateral dialogues to reflect more intentionally the typical concerns of churches in the Global South.

The Forum on Bilateral Dialogues provides opportunity for churches and families of churches to exchange information and consult one another on emerging issues, trends and concerns that are related to bilateral dialogues.

The gathering in Dar es Salaam was the 10th forum. It brought together 35 Christian World Communion representatives who are involved in bilateral dialogues at the international level.

Commenting on the Forum, Callam said it “lived up to its reputation as a meaningful space for deliberation on the coherence of bilateral dialogues and the way in which the Holy Spirit uses them to advance the process toward the realization of the visible unity of the church.”

CALLAM EXPRESSES SORROW at Orthodox Leader’s Passing

Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam sent condolences to members of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt on the passing of their leader, Pope Shenouda III, who died on March 17, in Cairo, at age 88.

In his letter, Callam described Pope Shenouda as “an outstanding Christian leader” who “never wavered in his faith when he was banished to a desert monastery by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.” He said that the leader of Egyptian Coptic Christians was “a community bridge builder par excellence” who made “an outstanding contribution to theological education among Coptic Orthodox students in Egypt.”

Pope Shenouda, Callam declared, “contributed significantly to the expansion of the Coptic Church in the service of his people in the diaspora, especially in North and South America and in South East Asia.”

Pope Shenouda III began his papacy in November 1971. He was the 117th Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of All Africa of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Approximately 10 percent of Egyptians belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, making up more than 90 percent of the number of Christians in the North African country.

“Baptists pledge their prayers on your behalf as you mourn the passing of an outstanding Christian leader,” Callam wrote in his letter. “May the memory of his witness continue to be a source of inspiration for the Christian family worldwide.”
One of the challenges facing the church today is the culture of technology,
said Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam.

Callam was speaking May 22 at a reception he hosted for pastors in the Washington Metropolitan Area at the international offices of the BWA in Falls Church, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, DC.

Callam, drawing on studies conducted by Albert Borgmann, a professor of philosophy at the University of Montana in the United States, said technology is not a neutral tool nor an unambiguous gift. According to Borgmann, “Technology is inhospitable to Christianity.” Technology “competes with grace as the dominant background of life,” Borgmann claims, because “cyberspace ... has swamped [us] and softened [us] ... and has left us with a world that raises in a radically new way the question of how God is present to us today.”

Callam supported Borgmann’s description of cyberspace as “the glamorous fog that settles on all that is. It muffles when it does not deaden the sweet sound of amazing grace.” Christians, Borgmann said, need “to dispel the seductive mist of cyberspace and to see it as a challenging backdrop” so that “grace can emerge with new vigor.”

The church may need to make use of available technology, even while being aware of the risks and dangers Borgmann and others have identified, Callam asserted. Pastors at the reception, many of whom are technologically savvy, echoed some of the concerns expressed by the BWA leader. Technology, if not applied properly, can be a distraction, it was observed. Churches should not view technology as a means to solve all their problems and it should not be seen or used as a means to “better market the church.”

One struggle that congregations have is to find persons to run a church’s media and technology program who are both technologically competent and theologically sensitive.

The value of technology was acknowledged by the group of pastors, who were from Northern Virginia, Southern Maryland and Washington, DC. Technology can help to enhance worship services, such as broadcasting reports, live or delayed, from fellow congregants and other Christians who are on the mission field. Technology is also useful in helping to tell personal and inspirational stories and testimonies, and in establishing connectivity among Christians and the wider community.

Social media can help to bring people together, even in times of disaster. One story shared was of a Washington, DC, area congregation that, a few years ago, held a worship service – via social media – after a heavy blizzard that made travel to church dangerous and difficult. In another instance, another congregation, this time in Mexico, held a worship service over the Internet after the government placed a moratorium on public gatherings due to the swine flu outbreak.

Despite concerns about what constitutes sacred space and about the theology of worship, the role and place of technology in the life of teens and young adults, and even among older persons, cannot be denied.

Several churches represented at the reception reported having “technology labs” to assist persons in their congregations to get acquainted with technology. Useful information can be gained by pastors being part of social media, as that is how a pastor may discover, sometimes to his or her surprise, “what is happening in the life of church members.”

BWA General Secretary Callam hosts two “coffee receptions” each year for Baptist pastors in the Washington Metropolitan area, usually in the spring and in the fall.

Neville Callam sharing a laugh with Greg Loewer, pastor for mission and evangelism at Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Virginia
The Baptist Union of Sweden (BUS) created a new church in collaboration with two other church bodies, forming a community of 70,000 members and approximately 900 congregations, the second largest Christian denomination in the Scandinavian country after the Lutheran Church of Sweden.

The decision was formalized at a gathering in Sweden in May of this year after the three entities, the BUS, the Evangelical-Methodist Church and the Mission Covenant Church, voted in June 2011 to create what is known as the Joint Future Church (JFC).

The new entity retains membership in a number of international ecumenical organizations, including the World Council of Churches; and confessional bodies, including the Baptist World Alliance, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Methodist Council, and the International Federation of Free Evangelical Churches.

The BUS will continue as a legal entity for the next 12 to 24 months during which time transitional arrangements will be worked out, but it effectively ceases to function as an autonomous body.

The JFC’s highest decision making body is the Church Conference, made up of elected delegates from JFC congregations that will meet annually. The Church Board is the highest decision making body in between Church Conferences and consists of a chair person and 10-14 members. The board is charged with carrying out the decisions of the Church Conference, and is responsible for recruiting and training persons for the ordained and other ministries and establishing a register of JFC congregations, among other duties.

Three Baptists were elected into key positions, Soren Carlsvaard, outgoing BUS president and vice president of the new entity, Ann-Sofie Lasell, board chair, and Christer Daelander, coordinator for Church and Society.

In an address at the June 2011 meeting in Stockholm, BWA General Secretary Neville Callam urged the gathering to give special consideration to the kind of unity that the three church bodies were contemplating. He said that the nature of church unity “is a question that has occupied the mind of many Christians and churches for many years” and indicated “that there is no one vision of the unity of the church that is shared by all Christians.”

Callam reminded delegates that “there is a certain provisionality about existing church structures generally, including those which emerge out of church union schemes.” He encouraged them “to resist the urge to build up fortresses...and church structures that now compete with other existing ecclesial structures and so exacerbate the situation of church disunity.”

The BWA leader, even while pointing out the risks associated with church unity ventures, nevertheless described Christian disunity as a scandal. The church, he said, “has a calling to bear witness to the unity given to her as a gift” and he prayed that “God will bless your life and mission together.”

European Baptist Federation (EBF) General Secretary Anthony Peck declared his confidence that “the identity that the Baptists will bring to the new church will remain a strong and important part of it.” He reported that the EBF had “agreed to let the JFC settle into its new life” and that the EBF will hold its 2014 Executive Committee meeting in Sweden. This, he said, “will be an opportunity for us to discuss with the church leadership the best way for the JFC to relate to the EBF.”

More than 2,000 persons attended the gathering in Stockholm including Baptists from Japan, Myanmar, Thailand, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Lithuania, Estonia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

From left: Methodist Pastor Lasse Svensson, new Joint Future Church president; EBF General Secretary Anthony Peck, Sofia Camneri and Olle Alkholm from the Mission Church, who were elected associate church leaders.
Joint Future: On the Way to a Uniting Church

By Karin Wiborn

One hundred and fifty to 200 years ago there was a strong spiritual movement in Sweden, at that time a society that was poor and oppressed. The Church of Sweden, at the time a state-church, partly joined with the oppressors. There were strong reactions against the injustice and different movements to make a change were formed. Among these were religious movements, including the Baptist Union of Sweden (BUS), formed in 1848, the Methodist Church, founded in 1868, and the Mission Covenant Church, founded in 1878.

In time, the Church of Sweden went through some changes and the ecumenical movement started. One of the outstanding leaders was former archbishop in the Church of Sweden, Nathan Söderblom, who invited all churches to an ecumenical meeting in Uppsala in 1925.

During my lifetime, ecumenism has been the everyday experience of most churches in Sweden. Relationships with other churches have always been an issue faced by Baptists. To whom should we relate? Baptists in Sweden endured two painful splits between 1907 and 1930 when what became the Pentecostals and Interact broke away.

But the movement toward forming uniting or united churches gained momentum each year, and the eagerness for unity was growing. An increasing number of local congregations were joining together.

When I began as general secretary of the BUS in 2003, nothing concrete had emerged from various movements and discussions toward unity. We had spent a lot of time engaging in theological dialogues and other forms of cooperation. Starting in 1992, our pastors were trained at the Stockholm School of Theology alongside those of the Mission Covenant Church, and the two church bodies jointly published a magazine. Both youth groups were close to a merger. Important steps toward unity were indeed being taken.

The boards of the BUS, the Mission Covenant Church and the Methodist Church decided to meet for prayer and dialogue, seeking the will of God, sharing our visions for the future, how to live the gospel, and the best way of supporting the local churches. We talked about how we could relate closely with and respect each other despite our theological and other differences. The question was whether our differences were so large that we had to live separately.

In the spring of 2006 six of us from the three church bodies went to Toscana in Italy to seek the mind of Christ on these particular issues through prayer and reflection. We had a powerful experience that led us to deepen our prayers for each other and the denominations we served.

We decided to place our proposals for a merger before the local churches. We drew on work done by others who came before us, including on Joint Faith, which was published in 1995. From there the seed germinated until it became a fully grown plant.

Karin Wiborn is general secretary of the Christian Council of Sweden and former general secretary of the Baptist Union of Sweden

The Scourge of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a growing crime that “involves an act or recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion or other means for the purpose of exploiting them,” as stated by the United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime. Those who are trafficked are forced into the sex industry or other types of compulsory labor. These people are often women and children from marginalized situations.

Lauran Bethell, human trafficking expert and recipient of the Baptist World Alliance 2005 Human Rights Award at the Baptist World Congress in Birmingham, England, presented a paper on the subject at the 2011 meeting of the BWA Commission on Social and Environmental Justice. Bethell reported that human trafficking is the “exploitation of vulnerability” related to three factors: economic hardship, childhood sexual abuse and grooming. Grooming occurs when individuals are targeted and manipulated into prostitution after emotional and/or financial dependency is created. Bethell also emphasized that human trafficking only occurs because there is a market for it.

Due to the subversive nature of this crime, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many individuals are victims of human trafficking. Many instances of human trafficking go undetected by authorities because it is kept secret or goes unprosecuted owing to law enforcement corruption. Citizens encountering the act may turn a blind eye because they do not recognize the seriousness of what is happening or even because they do not value the dignity of the persons involved.

Over the past several years, the plight of those who have been trafficked has been highlighted in the news and awareness of the widespread nature of this type of human rights violation has grown. At the 2007 BWA Annual Gathering in Accra, Ghana, the General Council called for “freedom for the 27 million still trapped in modern-day slavery across the world.”

The BWA, through its Division of Freedom and Justice, is committed to working to eradicate this crime and has developed and maintains a database of grassroots organizations and individuals actively working to end human trafficking. This database will help connect and develop ongoing efforts within the global Baptist family and foster collaboration among those serving at-risk persons in their region of the world. The BWA has also strengthened its involvement in collaborative United Nations’ efforts to end trafficking.

This human rights issue is a crucial one for both the church and secular society as we join together in both recognizing the violation and exploitation of the most vulnerable members of the global community and calling for cessation of this crime. To report any grassroots Baptist efforts, or to have your group included in the aforementioned database, please contact the BWA Division of Freedom and Justice at fandj@bwanet.org.
T he gang-rape and prolonged torture of a woman in a church near the Kachin-China border town of Pang Wa in Myanmar in early May show the ongoing impunity for sexual violence enjoyed by the Myanmar Army, says the Kachin Women’s Association of Thailand (KWAT).

Myanmar, a Southeast Asian country, also goes by the name of Burma, despite an official name change in 1989. The Kachin are one of the oppressed minority groups in Myanmar, a significant number of whom are Baptist Christians. Most live in the eponymous state of Kachin in the northernmost part of the country, which borders China, and have been in perpetual conflict with the national government since the 1960s. Tens of thousands have been displaced from their homes and have fled the conflicts to other parts of Myanmar, or live as refugees or sought asylum in other countries.

KWAT reported that on May 1, a patrol of Burmese troops from two battalions arrived at Luk Pi village, Chipwi Township, northwest of Pang Wa in Kachin state, and found “Ngwa Mi” (not her real name), aged 48, sheltering alone in a church after most of the other villagers had fled. About 10 soldiers beat her with rifle butts, stabbed her with knives, stripped her naked and gang-raped her over a period of three days in the church.

The abuse was witnessed by another villager, Yu Ta Gwi, aged 59, who was kidnapped while caring for his paralyzed wife. He was tied up in the church compound and kicked and stabbed by the Burmese troops. After the soldiers left on May 4, he and Ngwa Mi were found semi-conscious by other Kachin villagers and taken to Pang Wa hospital.

Ngwa Mi, a grandmother with 12 children, has been reunited with her family but has reportedly become mentally deranged.

“KWAT is gravely concerned at this latest incident of sexual violence, committed brazenly in the sanctuary of a church,” the statement reads. “KWAT places the blame squarely on the government in Naypyidaw, (Myanmar’s capital), where the Supreme Court recently dismissed charges against the Burmese military for the abduction and disappearance of a Kachin woman, Sunlut Roi Ja, in October last year.”

“The message from the Naypyidaw Supreme Court is clear: the Burmese military can rape and kill ethnic women with impunity,” said KWAT coordinator Moon Nay Li.

KWAT demanded the regime to immediately stop using rape as a weapon of war and to end the offensive against Kachin state.

The spread of conflict to the Pang Wa area has displaced thousands of villagers, according to KWAT, heightening the humanitarian crisis facing local communities seeking to feed and shelter more than 70,000 displaced persons since a Kachin ceasefire agreement was broken in June 2011.

Amid moves by the United States government to normalize relationships with Myanmar, the American Baptist Women’s Ministry (ABWM) wrote Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton expressing its “deep concern over human rights violations in the Kachin State of Burma, specifically the use of rape as a weapon of war.” Stating that it is “alarmed by continued reports of rape and torture of Kachin and other ethnic minority women,” ABWM claimed that these violations “continue unabated with little evidence of repercussion.”

Referring to the recent appointment of Derek Mitchell as US ambassador to Myanmar, the first such appointment in 22 years, and moves toward increased economic engagement with the Burmese government, ABWM said such moves may help to lose “sight of the crimes against humanity continuing in ethnic minority areas of the country.” The Americans called on the US government “to uphold its commitment to human rights, including holding the Burmese government accountable for crimes against humanity, as evidenced by the continuing use of rape as a weapon of war.”
The Baptist World Alliance sent US$25,000 in emergency financial assistance to a school in the Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand to assist in the school’s reconstruction after it was destroyed by fire on April 28.

The Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College, located in the Mae La Refugee Camp near the Thai-Myanmar border, faces uncertainty as to the start of the next term, which was set to begin in June. The school offers general education to refugees and training to church leaders. More than 300 students are enrolled.

BWA, through Baptist World Aid, its relief and development arm, is providing 50 percent of the estimated reconstruction cost of US$50,000. Additional funds of at least US$10,000 are needed for furnishing, equipment and school supplies.

(Continued on next page)
We lost everything, but we still have everything because God is our everything.

Gone with the fire are our sins and transgressions, not His mercy and grace.

Gone with the fire are the buildings and material things that can be replaced even with better ones, but praise the Lord that no life was lost.

Gone with the fire are the four visitor note books that contained best wishes, prayers, promises, and words of encouragements written by friends and brothers and sisters around the world, but not their love, care, and concern expressed in their words and deeds.

Gone with the fire are our fears and doubts, not our hope and faith in Almighty God.

Thank you all for helping in the rebuilding of our KKBBSC.

God bless,
Saw Simon
Christian World Communions (CWCs) affirm the diversity of dialogues between church families and their members. Some occur on the national or regional level, such as the dialogue between Baptists, Methodists and Waldensians in Italy (1990) and between Bavarian Baptists and Lutherans (2009). Discussions at the international level require a diverse group of competent scholars and leaders. The final text of such dialogues tends to reflect this cultural diversity.

BWA owes a debt of gratitude to all those who have represented the Baptist family in international bilateral dialogues with other Christian World Communions (CWCs).

Representatives who are still alive are an important source of information on the dialogues themselves.

BWA has entered into dialogue with the following CWCs:
- Baptist/Reformed 1973-1977, Baptist/Roman Catholic 1 1984-1988,
- Baptist/Lutheran 1986-1989, Baptist/Mennonite 1989-1992,

Baptist participants in these dialogues were:

**Baptist/Reformed, 1973-1977**
- Rudolph Thaut (Germany)
- Jannes Reiling (Netherlands)
- Penrose St. Amant (Switzerland)
- Gunter Wagner (Switzerland)
- C. Ronald Goulding (UK, residing in USA)

**Baptist/Roman Catholic 1, 1984-1988**
- David Shannon (USA)
- Pablo Deiros (Argentina)
- Richard Harmon (USA)
- E. Glenn Hinson (USA)
- Paolo Spanu (Italy)
- G. Noel Vose (Australia)
- Michael Zidkov (USSR)
- Glenn Igleheart (USA)

**Baptist/Lutheran, 1986-1989**
- Gerald Borchert (USA)
- Nils Engelsen (Norway)
- B. Shanti Kumari (India)
- Thorwald Lorenzen (Switzerland)
- Ward Popkes (Germany)
- Douglas Waruta (Kenya)
- Wayne Pipkin (USA)
- Jörg Swoboda (Germany)
- Knud Wumpelman (Denmark)

**Baptist/Mennonite, 1989-1992**
- William Brackney (USA)
- Beverley Scott (USA)
- Richard Coffin (Canada)
- Daniel McGhee (USA)
- David Scholer (USA)
- G. Noel Vose (Australia)
- J. Ralph McIntyre (USA/Canada)

**Baptist/Anglican, 2000-2005**
- The dialogue was served by a Continuation Committee comprising:
  - Paul Fiddes (UK)
  - Ken Manley (Australia)
  - Timothy George (USA)
  - Thomas Yarnell (USA)
  - Tony Cupit (Australia)
- Meetings were intentionally convened in different parts of the world with persons from the region named as official BWA representatives:
  - Europe (September 2000) with six additional Europeans attending
  - Asia & Oceania (January 2001) with six Asians present
  - Africa (January 2002) with four Africans present
  - The Southern Cone (January 2003) with six Latin Americans present
  - Caribbean (January 2003) with five present from the region
  - North America (September 2003) with six North Americans present

**Baptist/Roman Catholic 2, 2006-2010**
- Paul Fiddes (UK)
- Anthony Peck (UK)
- Tadeus Zelinski (Poland)
- Fred Deegbe (Ghana)
- Timothy George (USA)
- Steven Harmon (USA)
- Nora Lozano (Mexico/USA)
- Tomas Mackey (Argentina)
- Neville Callam (Jamaica)
- Fausto Vasconcelos (Brazil)
- Consultants included Curtis Freeman (2007-2010) and also Denton Lotz, Massimo Aprile, Nancy Bedford and Elizabeth Newman.
Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam has named the team that is to represent the BWA in the international Baptist-Pentecostal dialogue that begins in Quito, Ecuador, in August.

In March of this year, the Executive Committee of the BWA gave authorization to Callam to “gather a small team of competent theologians and church leaders reflecting the cultural diversity of the world Baptist family to undertake an international theological dialogue with Pentecostals.”

Team members have been drawn from the six regions of the BWA: Henry Mugabe from Zimbabwe (Africa); Miyon Chung from South Korea (Asia); Burchell Taylor from Jamaica (Caribbean); Nigel Wright from the United Kingdom (Europe); Richard Serrano of Venezuela (Latin America); and William Brackney from Canada and David Goatley from the United States (North America).

Mugabe is a visiting professor of theology at the Richmond Theological Seminary in the United States and is former president of the Baptist Theological Seminary of Harare. Chung is professor at the Torch Trinity Graduate School of Theology, is vice chair of the BWA Mission, Evangelism and Theological Reflection (METR) Advisory Committee, and is a member of the BWA Commission on Doctrine and Christian Unity. Taylor is pastor of the Bethel Baptist Church in St. Andrew, teaches several courses at the United Theological College of the West Indies, and is a vice president of the BWA, among other BWA appointments.

Wright is principal of Spurgeon’s College and Serrano is president of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Venezuela. Brackney is director of the Acadia Center for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies at Acadia Divinity College and is a member of the BWA Commission on Christian Ethics and the Commission on Doctrine and Christian Unity, among other BWA appointments. Goatley is executive secretary-treasurer of the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention and, among other BWA appointments, sits on the General Council and is chair of the METR Advisory Committee.

Callam said that the “BWA is highly respectful of the leaders of all Christian World Communions and the families of churches they serve.” The BWA, he explained, “expects that the dialogue with the Pentecostals will offer an opportunity both to formulate clear statements on doctrinal agreements that Baptists share with Pentecostals,” and to “engage constructively around the issues on which we are not yet agreed.”

This is the seventh theological dialogue in which the BWA will be engaged. The first was with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches from 1973-1977 followed by talks with the Roman Catholic Church from 1984-1988; the Lutheran World Federation from 1986-1989; the Mennonite World Conference from 1989-1992; the Anglican Communion between 2000 and 2005; and the Roman Catholic Church (Second Round) from 2006-2010.

This first round of the Baptist-Pentecostal Dialogue continues until 2015.
Andre Thobois,

former president of the Federation of Evangelical Baptist Churches of France, died on March 26. He was 88 years old. Born in 1924 in Ardin (Deux-Sevres), Thobois was ordained to the Christian ministry in 1949 after studying at the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Paris.

He was president of the French Baptist union from 1963 to 1987 after serving as vice president from 1957-1963. An ecumenist, Thobois was vice president of the Protestant Federation of France between 1968 and 1992, and was head of the French Bible Society from 1975 to 1997. He also co-chaired the first Baptist-Catholic Joint Committee in France between 1981 and 1987 and was a member of the Council of Christian Churches in France.

Thobois was pastor of the Avenue du Maine Baptist Church in Paris from 1950 to 1990. A teacher and well-known speaker, he was chairman of the Free Faculty of Evangelical Theology in Vaux-sur-Seine from 1984-1994. He authored several books and was a frequent contributor to the magazine, *Baptist Believe and Serve*.

He served the Baptist World Alliance in a number of capacities, including as a member of the General Council and Executive Committee. Thobois was also a member, at various times, of the Commission on Baptist Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation, the Commission on Evangelism and Mission, the Commission on Christian Teaching and Training, and the National Evangelism Workgroup.

He leaves wife, Madeleine, and four children.

Funeral services were held June 4 at River Road Baptist Church in Richmond, the capital of Virginia.

Julian Pentecost,

former editor of the Religious Herald, the newspaper for Baptists in the state of Virginia in the United States, died on May 31. He was 87 years old.


He held several trusteeships within the Southern Baptist Convention, including trustee of the Home (now North American) Mission Board and the Foreign (now International) Mission Board. He was also a trustee of the University of Richmond and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, which is based in Louisville, Kentucky.

Pentecost was a former president of the Southern Baptist Press Association and was a founding director of Associated Baptist Press, an independent Baptist newswire service.

The Virginia Baptist leader served the Baptist World Alliance in various capacities, including as a member of the Communications Committee, the Church Life Committee, and the Commission on Baptist Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation.

He earned degrees from the University of Richmond and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Predeceased by wife, Mary, who died last November, he leaves son, Julian Jr., and daughters, Anne and Nancy.

Funeral services were held on the afternoon of April 8 at the Serkawn Local Church at the BCM headquarters.

He presented a number of papers at conferences and had articles published in leading journals. He published a memoir, *My Life Journey*, when he was in his 90s that details much of the history of Baptists in Mizoram, one of India’s northeastern states.

In recognition of his life’s work and service, Luaia was conferred with the Doctor of Divinity degree by the Senate of Serampore, a theological accreditation body in India.

He is survived by his youngest son and other family members.

Funeral services were held on the afternoon of April 8 at the Serkawn Local Church at the BCM headquarters.

Jules Casséus, Rector of the Christian University of North Haiti, pulls no punches in his examination of the causes and consequences of Haiti’s devastating January 12, 2010 earthquake. The temblor destroyed much of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and surrounding towns and cities of the Caribbean nation, killing hundreds of thousands, injuring tens of thousands, and displacing millions.

*Haiti Earthquake 2010, Chronicle of a Year in Crisis* is drawn mainly from addresses and sermons that Casséus delivered after the quake. (Casséus has been pastor of the Baptist Church of Upper Limbé since 1970). He declares that Haitians are culpable, even while he rejects the notion that the earthquake was a “judgment of God upon the Haitian people.”

Casséus blames “ignorance and disrespect of the norms of social life, housing, of good citizenship and good governance” for the consequences of the earthquake. While the quake was a natural disaster, “the extent of the damage is the result of the negligence of our leaders and their disrespect of standards, a disrespect observed at every level of Haitian society.”

The church, he believes, has a core responsibility to move the nation forward. The church needs to recognize that this is a *Kairos* moment, “an opportunity for the people of God in Haiti to start a new life.” But, he says, “the theological conception of the Haitian is somewhat naïve.”

Casséus chastises the church for being silent and failing “to take a stand against the blatant sins in our society where corruption, exploitation, oppression and injustice are ruling at all levels.” But in the aftermath of what he calls “the apocalyptic earthquake of January 12,” it is an opportunity “for God’s agents in Haiti to work for the rebirth of the nation and prepare a bright future for the Haitian people.”

**Books Received by the BWA**


Preaching that Builds Community

It is becoming ever more apparent to me that we must speak with new clarity about what life together as Christians means. It is time for the church, Baptists in particular, to rediscover its communal self again, to discover how connected we are to one another. This is a most urgent need. In this age of technology, of minimal connectedness, of independent leanings, and of isolated leadership, I think it is time to remind ourselves that there is no viable presence of Christ without a real body. There is no bona fide faith that isn’t lived socially and communally. So, as I have traveled I have been interested to learn what kind of preaching best addresses life together. It has been pleasing to see how many Baptist communities around the world are addressing this issue. The question has been for me, “What kind of preaching best fosters the communal?” Let me share a few insights I have gained from listening to preachers around the world.

First, one notices that the very act of preaching itself raises its own challenges. The challenge for the preacher is how to connect with the person listening because there is “me and my sermon up here” and “you and your ears down there.” There is a perception of hierarchy that needs to be overcome so that sermons can be conceived and spoken in ways that suggest and embody community. I’m talking about the very spirit of the sermon. At the Brazilian Baptist Convention this year I listened to a superb sermon by a pastor who is fighting life-threatening cancer. His sermon matched not only what the text said; its content also matched the form and movement of the text. You don’t preach about loss and grief in a didactic mode and expect people to feel the grief with you. He had thousands of people at that meeting walking with him, not only in words, but walking with him through the form and the movement of the sermon. Every heart was stirred in the room. It was not an “I’m up here and you are down there” kind of experience. It was human hearts connecting. The spirit of the sermon must be communal.

Second, I have been reminded of the importance of the language used in the sermon. While in Russia recently, I heard a brother from one of the “Stanish” countries preach about the necessity of Christian community. As he spoke he called upon the larger family to not forget brothers and sisters who are arrested and persecuted at the whim of government officials. He had just gotten out of jail himself for carrying the Thompson Chain Reference Bible. I was captured by the kind of language he used that promoted communal connections in his preaching. He asked questions in his sermon for the sake of community. He had thought through what language, tone, and form best honored the freedom of the group. He had thought through what made the “least of these” concept most accessible to all of us. His language left open spaces for us to think, choose, and act. His ending to the sermon led us to want to continue the conversation that he had started. I learned from him that language can draw correct little lines or it can open great doors. Tone can tumble down vertically or extend like a horizontal hand. The sermon can be a forced march or a lively human walking conversation. Language has tremendous cohesive power.

Finally, in South Africa listening to those who suffered under Apartheid, I discovered my tendency to take a text written for the larger community and apply it only to the individual heart and life. When this is done, larger community issues are rarely addressed. I was reminded at that meeting that in the Bible faith is understood communally. The Old Testament calls us to be a covenant people. The New Testament calls us to an ecclesia. The vast majority of the time when scripture says “you,” it is plural. Of course, the individual life in scripture is enormously valued and individual accountability is never in question, but on the whole there is a collective dimension to faith you would never guess exists if you were to listen to most of our preaching. We must keep the plural texts in the plural.

All this is to say, you and I meet the Holy most powerfully when we meet it together. We discern the Holy more faithfully when we discern together. And, this walk is a whole lot more fun when we do it together. I’m glad there are churches and pastors in the world who are getting the importance of all this. They seem to be getting it in Latin America, in Asia, in Africa, in Eastern Europe, and in the lower economic sectors of North America and Europe.

If the drift of current global culture is any indication, the challenge of being community is going to get worse. A landscape of what once was community is filling up fast with millions of individuals holding solitary screens. There is a place for the screens, but there will always be a place needed for adjacent living. We don’t need to create a topical series of sermons about community, just preaching the Bible will take us right were we need to go. I am very grateful to my community called the Baptist World Alliance for reminding me of the gift I have in the family of Christ.
Meet, fellowship & worship with Baptist youth from around the world.

SINGAPORE
July 17–21, 2013