The BWA Welcomes a New General Secretary

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BWA honors Clem Gimbert

The Baptist World Alliance honored and paid tribute to one of its longest serving officers on Thursday, September 6. Clement Gimbert, who served the BWA as treasurer for a total of 20 years and is retiring from that position, was recognized for outstanding and meritorious service to the international organization.

Involved with the BWA for a total of 26 years, Gimbert, in addition to being treasurer, has also chaired the Budget and Finance Committee, as well as the Investment Committee.

He was lauded for helping to steady the ship of the BWA through times of financial challenges, including the collapse of the stock market where investments are held, and defunding from other sources. Gimbert also played a key role in the sale of the previous building owned by the BWA, as well as the purchase of the current headquarters in 2001.

Among those paying tribute to Gimbert was BWA General Secretary Emeritus Denton Lotz; former BWA treasurer, John Jones; current and former chairs of the Budget and Finance Committee, Richard Smith and John O. Peterson, respectively; and Henry Green, pastor of the Heritage Baptist Church in Annapolis, where Gimbert is chair of the church’s finance committee.

Ellen Teague, BWA finance director, and Joanne Hendricks, accounts manager, spoke of the personal support and interest Gimbert demonstrated toward the accounting staff at the BWA.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam presented a plaque to Gimbert in recognition of his years of service. Gimbert will continue to serve the BWA as a member of both the Budget and Finance and Investment Committees.

Unless otherwise noted, photos in the issue are by BWA staff.
19 Baptists Gather in Ghana
Baptists from more than 50 countries came together in Accra, Ghana for the BWA’s Annual Gathering, where they fellowshipped, worshipped, and made decisions about the BWA’s work.

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We Have Not Been This Way Before

Friday, August 6, 2007, was a memorable day as Neville Callam was commissioned in Accra, Ghana, as General Secretary Elect of the BWA. It was a historic moment for the BWA to set apart this gifted leader on the same continent where his ancestors had passed through the ‘door of no return’ and shipped as slaves to the West Indies. By God’s providence, Neville has emerged as our new General Secretary and I encourage you to pray earnestly for Neville and his wife Dulcie in these early days of his leadership among us.

In this moment of BWA leadership transition it is significant to reflect on the opening chapter of the book of Joshua. First, there is the promise of a continuity of blessing to Joshua – “As I was with Moses – so I will be with you.” Moses had listened to God and knew the moment for transitional leadership had arrived and with confidence he was able to declare to Joshua, “You are now the one to lead the people” (Deut. 31:1-8). Equally, the Israelites were asked to be spiritually mature in this moment of leadership transition. For decades God’s people had grown accustomed to the Moses style of leadership and now as Joshua assumed his new responsibilities, their loyal service was to continue under a new anointed leadership. As the blessing of leadership is transferred from Denton to Neville, the promise of divine accompaniment continues and spiritually mature disciples will be strengthened to make that journey of transition. Leadership may change but the promises for the journey continue.

The second thing is the certainty of discontinuity – “You have not been this way before.” For all the knowledge and experience that had been garnered by leaders and people, this was a new and significant moment for Israel. The victories and setbacks of the wilderness journey had provided a large legacy of spiritual experience. But the crossing of the Jordan and the entry into the Promised Land was a new moment in the history of Israel requiring them to be strong and courageous in faith for the challenges that lay ahead.

The BWA has a history of one hundred years of victories and setbacks that have enlarged our corporate experience. But a new day has dawned and in numerous areas we must acknowledge with some urgency, “We have not been this way before.”

The BWA leadership is changing and Neville and the Executive staff and the member bodies require grace, wisdom and mutual tolerance to discover new routes to uncertain lands.

The Baptist world is changing and a new generation is emerging that may not choose to practice traditional Baptists principles in a form with which we are familiar. Through the centuries Baptists have always struggled to make a distinction between the unchanging rock and the flowing river. We need a large dose of spiritual discernment to distinguish between standing firm on the unchanging bedrock of Baptist tradition and moving with the flow of the river where the Holy Spirit is doing a new thing.

The world at large is changing and the unpredictable violence, religious extremism and racist xenophobia we are experiencing in the early years of the 21st century will surely leave its mark on the familiar ways we gather together as a BWA. With the growing erosion of human rights, border controls and visa restrictions, we may find it increasingly difficult to assemble as a truly representative family at our annual gatherings and Congress events.

The movement that is grounded in timeless spiritual values is well prepared for the unexpected. Dietrich Bonhoeffer lived and witnessed through the changing years of the 1930’s and consistently spoke out against the evils of Nazism. After hearing of the execution of some of his companions, he composed a poem in prison that he called ‘Stations on the road to freedom.’ He spoke of the need for spiritual values such as discipline, action, suffering and death:

‘Discipline- learn above all things to govern your soul and your senses’

‘Action-faint not nor fear, but go out to the storm and the action’

‘Suffering- your hands are bound, but your cause is committed to stronger hands’

‘Death- come now thou greatest of feasts of the journey to freedom eternal’

These are some of the values which can serve as a trusted signpost for those who are being led along a way they have not been before.
Indonesia

Baptists Celebrate 36th Anniversary of Working Together

More than 2,000 representatives of the six Baptist conventions in Indonesia came together in Jakarta on August 11, 2007 to celebrate 36 years of ministering side by side as the Union of Indonesian Baptist Churches (UIBC).

The theme of the evening was, ‘Hallelujah, Praise the Lord,’ as the UIBC celebrated its growth to 630 churches in more than 16 provinces, despite persecution in many of the provinces by Muslim extremists. Traditional dances and music from several provinces were featured, with greetings from across Asia, a guest conductor from Japan, and soloists from the Philippines and Korea.

The public celebration was the culmination of a week of events. The most important of these was the 2007 Indonesian Mission Conference co-sponsored by the Asian Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF). The conference, held August 9-11, focused on creating a mission strategy for Indonesian Baptists that utilizes partnerships from around the world. Participants also considered ways to minister effectively as a religious minority in the largest Muslim nation in the world.

Featured speakers at the conference were Alan Stanford, BWA Director of Mission Advancement; Brian Winslade, Senior Pastor of Windsor Park Baptist Church in New Zealand and former National Leader of the Baptist Union of New Zealand; Bonny Resu, General Secretary of APBF; and medical doctor Andreas Andoko, Director of the Immanuel Baptist Hospital in Bandar Lampung and Chairman of the Sumatra Mission Team.

There was also a one day music conference in which 250 people received instruction in conducting, vocal training, and piano accompaniment.

All of the events were hosted by Indonesian Union President Guntur Subagyo and his wife, Inge.

Zambia

Church Grows Despite Lack of Resources

It is, by international standards, not a small convention. There are over 550 churches with more than 100,000 members. Yet the Baptist Convention of Zambia (BCZ) has a full-time administrative staff of only one – General Secretary George Zulu.

It is Zulu’s task to help guide the convention in the Southern African country to achieve its 12 strategic goals, passed in the ‘Agape Declaration’ in 2005 which sets out the plans of the convention from 2006-2010. Capacity building, conflict resolutions, leadership training, and compassionate ministries, among others, are the major goals that the convention has set for itself.

Led by President Thomas Lumba, BCZ, a member body of the Baptist World Alliance, aims to identify, train, and equip church planters and evangelists, as well as to identify areas where new churches may be planted. “The BCZ member churches shall emphasize and act on evangelism which plants and nurtures new churches. All local member churches of the BCZ shall plant and nurture at least two new churches in a year,” the Declaration says.

The oldest church in the convention was founded in 1958. Twenty-six years later, in 1974, the BCZ was formed, but endured a painful split in 1995. The convention then renewed its efforts in evangelism and church planting. Since 1995, 250 new churches have been planted with an addition of approximately 30,000 new members. “Some churches started with ‘plastics’ over their heads with 10 members,” Zulu said, “but these churches have grown to 200 members plus.”

The needs of the convention are great, due in part to the evangelism and church planting successes that the BCZ has achieved since 1995. An immediate need is for theological education and ministerial training. “Most of our pastors are untrained, though many are professionals, such as school teachers, and others are businessmen,” the General Secretary explained. The theological school was one of the casualties of the split suffered in 1995. A new educational center is being established, with a view to meeting the theological training gap of the convention’s pastoral leadership.

Another need is for pastors to be able to earn a living wage. “There is a need for churches to support church workers on a living wage so that they can serve full time,” Zulu said.

The Agape Declaration “Was drafted after intense days of hard working together,” said President Lumba. It was named after the Agape Baptist Church where the meetings were held with almost 40 participants in July 2005.
Pastor Sentenced to Two Years in Prison

Zaur Balaev, a 44-year-old pastor in Aliabad, Azerbaijan, was sentenced to two years in prison on August 8 on charges that he beat up five policemen and damaged a police car door, according to Forum 18, a news service based in Oslo, Norway.

Arrested on May 20 during a raid on a church service at his home, Balaev was originally accused of resisting arrest and setting dogs on police officers. The congregation of the church denied these charges saying the pastor went peacefully. More than 50 people, including members of the congregation and non-Christian villagers, signed written statements testifying to Balaev’s innocence, Forum 18 reported.

Prior to Balaev’s trial that began on July 16, the police changed the allegations against him and accused the pastor of beating up five policemen and damaging a police car door. The congregation also denies these charges. Ilya Zenchenko, president of the Baptist Union of Azerbaijan, quoted by Forum 18, questioned, “How could a thin man like Zaur beat up five strong policemen?”

Balaev was convicted under Article 315, Part 1, of Azerbaijan’s Criminal Code which punishes violence or the threat of violence against state representatives carrying out official duties. “Article 315 is a very efficient article for the authorities since they can use it easily if they want to put people into prison,” Zenchenko told Forum 18.

The Baptist Union of Azerbaijan planned on submitting an appeal on August 10.

In response to Balaev’s sentence, BWA President David Coffey said, “I express my profound concern at the news of Pastor Balaev’s unjust two-year prison sentence. The BWA will be supporting the Azerbaijan Baptist Union as they submit an appeal against the court verdict and I am confident the European Baptist Federation will also raise the matter during their forthcoming annual Council meeting in Budapest.”

Baptists in Balaev’s town of Aliabad are often harassed and face difficulties from government officials. Abuses include the denial of birth certificates for their children, forced unemployment, postal censorship, literature restrictions and threats and intimidation, Forum 18 reports. Aliabad is close to the Georgian border, and is mainly populated by Georgian-speaking Muslims. Baptists are sometimes viewed by local authorities as traitors for converting to Christianity.

Baptist churches are often refused legal status in Azerbaijan. The indictment for the May 20th raid stated that the church did not have state registration, and therefore was not allowed to meet. The church has applied for registration many times over the past 13 years, but the requests have all been denied. According to Forum 18, when representatives of the news service visited the office of the notary public in 2004 to ask why the church’s registration application was being held up, the official said, “We don’t need any Baptists here.”

Retiring BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz appealed to the Azerbaijan Ambassador in the United States on June 12, “We are very concerned that freedom of religion is not defended in Azerbaijan, but that the Ministry of Religion continues to use secret police and other means to suppress religious aspirations of many people in your country.

“We appeal to you and your government to release Pastor Zaur Balaev and to increase the guarantee of religious freedom for minorities whether they are Christian or Muslim.”

As Balaev begins his two-year sentence, there are concerns about his health. Since his incarceration in May, Balaev, who was born with a heart defect, has had two heart...
attacks, kidney problems, and has been beaten by police, according to a Forum 18 report. His family is not allowed to visit him, and has gone into debt to pay to take food to him.

“I have written to the General Secretary of the Azerbaijan Baptist Union assuring him that we are praying for Pastor Balaev and his family at this time,” Coffey said. “When I visited Azerbaijan in May 2007 (prior to Pastor Balaev’s arrest) I visited the British Ambassador in Baku and alerted him to the concerns that local Baptists were expressing about harassments of local congregations by local officials and infringements of religious liberty. I am now hoping that local diplomatic efforts will be made to secure the release of the pastor.”

Lotz has made a plea to the US government to take action. In a letter to President George W. Bush on August 14, Lotz said, “We are horrified that the country of Azerbaijan has unjustly imprisoned the Baptist pastor, Zaur Balaev. It is particularly sad to us that the country of Azerbaijan has such strong restrictions upon religious freedom for Protestants and other Christians. It seems to Baptists worldwide that it is unconscionable for the U.S. Government to be involved in any way with making treaties or arrangements with the government of Azerbaijan when it denies essential freedoms of religion to its people.

“We appeal to you and to the US government to do all that it can to give relief and release from prison of Zaur Balaev.”

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**Circulation Statement**

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Eron Henry, Editor

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If the plans of the two largest Baptist conventions in Cuba come to fruition, then Baptist witness in that Caribbean country should, by the end of this decade, experience an explosion of growth.

The Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba plans an evangelistic thrust to reach 500,000 people by 2010, while its counterpart, the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba, aims to plant 1,000 new house churches within that time period.

The conventions are using the strategy of cell group ministry to attain a wider geographical reach and to deepen penetration in their regions. Most church congregations are divided into zones, which are further divided into cell groups. These groups have the responsibility to plan and initiate evangelism outreach ministries. With this approach, one congregation was able to reach 2000 persons, which a leader in the western convention described as “typical.”

“We used to think people should come and we would make disciples. Now, we are going into our towns and villages and reaching people to make disciples,” the Cuban Baptist leader, who requested anonymity, and who has had over 40 years of ministry, said.

The western convention currently has 250 member churches, and has experienced tremendous growth over the past 10 years. “These are very exciting times for the church in Cuba. The church was very small and struggling. Many pastors left. It was very rare to see a conversion or baptism. We couldn’t repair our buildings – we had no money, no materials and no people in the church that could do the work. But in these last 10 years or so, the church has grown – it has grown a lot,” the church leader, whose family is heavily involved in full time ministry, said in an interview.

The larger eastern convention has more than 320 churches.

Both conventions, along with two smaller conventions, the Free Baptist Convention of Cuba and the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba, are member bodies of the Baptist World Alliance, which held its General Council meeting in that country in 2000. A meeting held between a BWA delegation and the Cuban government in 2000 led to the distribution of Bibles in the largest island in the Caribbean with a population of over 11 million.

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**Cuba**

**Ambitious Church Planting Planned**

Balaev became a Christian in 1992, the first in Aliabad, news sources report. He became the first pastor in the Zaqatala region, starting a church in his home within a year of his conversion. The church in Aliabad now has approximately 40 members between the ages of 20 and 35.
Africa will be the focus of the 2007 Baptist Women’s World Day of Prayer, observed throughout the world on November 5. Project Vineyard, sponsored by the Women’s Missionary Union (WMU) of Nigeria, is one of the projects that women worldwide will support with their prayers and offerings on the World Day of Prayer.

To be able to better inform Baptist women about the project, representatives of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Women’s Department visited Nigeria following the BWA Annual Gathering in July to meet with WMU of Nigeria. The BWA Women’s Department team, Donna Groover, Secretary/Treasurer; Amparo de Medina, former vice president; Yemi Ladokun, president of the Baptist Women’s Union of Africa, vice president of the BWA, and executive secretary of the WMU of Nigeria; and me, executive director, visited Camp Young Ede where Project Vineyard is being developed.

It was an overwhelming experience to see the children, young girls and women singing and praising the Lord through dance as our team arrived at Camp Young Ede. The Baptist women and youth organizations shared with us the different projects they are doing to reach their country for Christ.

Project Vineyard’s goal is increased self esteem and economic empowerment of the poor among the Baptist women of Nigeria. Buildings at the camp will be renovated and made into workshops and training centers. Training will enable the women to find gainful employment in agriculture and various micro-enterprises that will improve their earning capacity and provide a sustainable livelihood.

While in Nigeria, our team also had opportunities to meet with Baptist women in Lagos and Ibadan. The meeting in Lagos was held at the First Baptist Church of Lagos which recently celebrated its 150th anniversary. Around the breakfast tables, we shared a time of fellowship with the Nigerian women and learned

The Philadelphia Baptist Association (PBA), the oldest association of Baptists in the USA, celebrates its 300th anniversary September 6-9.

PBA, in Southeastern Pennsylvania, is one of 33 regions of the American Baptist Churches in the USA. The association of 123 churches has 54,000 members, including from the Hispanic, Haitian, Russian, Latvian, Liberian, Chinese, Anglo and African American communities.

Organized in 1707, the PBA originally represented Baptists in a wide geographical range, including churches in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Maryland, Virginia and North and South Carolina, but became more local as other associations formed.

In recognition of PBA’s anniversary, retiring BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz said, “The BWA joins Baptists in the USA and around the world in sending congratulations to the Philadelphia Baptist Association, the first Baptist association in the USA.

“This historic celebration is a reminder to us of how God has blessed the Baptist witness in the USA. From a small group of persecuted believers, looked down upon by the mainline churches, Baptists in the USA are now a community of more than 60 million believers. As the largest Protestant group in the USA there is a great responsibility that goes along with it.

“We pray God’s blessings upon Baptists not only in Philadelphia, but also in Pennsylvania and the whole country. May all of us continue the prophetic mission of Baptists in mission and evangelism as well as becoming ‘drum majors for justice,’ as Martin Luther King reminded us.”

Throughout its history, PBA has been active in social reform and charitable ministries. Churches in the association were involved in the temperance movement, as well as the movement to abolish slavery. They played a role in the establishment of institutions such as a retirement home, an orphanage, Temple University and Temple University Hospital.

Alan Stanford, BWA Director of Mission Advancement and General Secretary of the North American Baptist Fellowship, presented a congratulatory plaque to the PBA during their anniversary celebration.
The Community of Christian Churches in Africa (CECA) is the newest member body of the Baptist World Alliance. The convention, with 30,000-plus members, was unanimously received into the international organization in a vote taken during the General Council Meeting in Accra, Ghana, after recommendation by the Membership Committee.

Led by Enoch B. Dusingizimana, President and General Secretary, CECA has 115 churches and 141 pastors. Formed in November 1991, CECA is based in French-speaking Rwanda but also has ministries in Burundi, Uganda, and in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Ministry activities include church planting, training, HIV/AIDS work, ministry to prison inmates, as well as entrepreneurship promotion and social services such as education and health services.

CECA has approximately 3,000 students enrolled in five high schools, two primary schools, 28 kindergarten schools, and a Bible school, in addition to 54 basic literacy centers in local churches around the country. Fifty five percent of its students are orphans “Because of war and HIV/AIDS,” a church report says.

Enoch Dusingizimana

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About how God is working among them as they reach out and minister to women and children.

Our team was greeted with song and dance when we arrived at the WMU building in Ibadan. Once again, we learned about how Baptist women in Nigeria are responding to God’s call to share His message of salvation and change the lives of women forever.

One example of a life changed by God is Esther whom we met along with her husband, James, and her daughters, Gift and Favor. Esther was a prostitute when women from the WMU of Nigeria shared God’s message of love and salvation with her. She accepted the Lord as her Savior and now Esther and the WMU women are working together to help Esther’s friends have the same life changing experience.

The Baptist women of Africa and the Baptist women of Latin America are prayer partners. Amparo de Medina from Latin America shared some prayer concerns with the Nigerian women and led them in prayer in Spanish.

Another stop in Ibadan was the Soul Rescue Baptist Church where Aduke Akinola, former Secretary/Treasurer of the Women’s Department and former BWA vice president, has a Rescue Center for women at the church. Through the caring ministry of the center, women, girls, and children receive hope and joy in life’s daily struggles. The Global Mission Board of the Baptist Convention of Nigeria is working with Akinola in the establishment of the ministry at the church.

Our team also visited the offices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) while in Ibadan. Solomon Ishola, General Secretary of the NBC, shared about the work of the convention and the importance of reaching Nigeria for Christ.

Baptist women in Nigeria live out their WMU motto, “…we are laborers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9), as they minister and bring Christ’s message of salvation to their wonderful country.
North America

North Americans Meet Callam

Baptists in more than fifteen cities across the USA and Canada will welcome Neville Callam, new Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary, during a North American Introduction tour, September 24 through October 30.

Callam will visit and converse with state convention leaders, seminary students and staff, pastors, church leaders, and other groups. Some public services and events are scheduled, as well as events for specific groups. These tour events will provide an opportunity for North Americans to learn more about Callam and his vision for the BWA as he assumes leadership.

For more information about the tour, please visit the BWA website, www.bwanet.org, or contact Kathe Traynham, Associate Director of Promotion and Development, at +1-703-790-8980 x171.

Russia

Seminaries Merge, Appoint New President

Peter Mitskevich, new president of the Moscow Theological Seminary

Peter Mitskevich, senior vice president of the Russian Baptist Union and pastor of the Golgotha Baptist Church in Moscow was elected rector (president) of the Moscow Theological Seminary (MTS) on June 13. He assumed duties immediately.

Mitskevich, a medical doctor, was ordained to the Christian ministry in 1991, and has been vice president of the Russian Baptist Union since 2002, a union of more than 1,500 churches and over 80,000 members. He previously served as academic dean of the MTS and has taught systematic theology and pastoral leadership, among other courses.

The new rector was influenced in his early years by Christian parents and grandparents in communist Russia. His grandfather was jailed for more than 10 years for his Christian faith, while his father, Valter Mitskevich, lost his job as a dentist after he converted to Christianity. The 48 year old Peter Mitskevich made his own personal commitment to Christ when he was 14 years old.

The graduate of Moscow Medical University studied at the Moscow Bible Institute upon his call to the Christian ministry. He furthered his studies at Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas, USA, and is also a trained counselor and church planter. He is host of the Christian radio broadcast, Insight for Living, via TransWorldRadio.

“I am excited about the great opportunity to serve my Lord and my nation Russia. The churches of Russia need pastors and teachers from our school. The people of Russia need the Lord,” Mitskevich said in response to his appointment.

MTS is a merger of the Moscow Theological Seminary and the Moscow Theological Institute. The merger began in November 2006 when the Institute moved to the MTS campus. The school operates in four locations, Chita, Chelyabinsk, and Noyabrsk, in addition to the core campus in Moscow. Other campuses are slated to be opened at Lenin-Kuznetsky in October 2007 and Rostov On Don in 2008. When the new centers are operational, the seminary enrollment is expected to rise above 300 students from a current enrolment of just over 230.

Courses are offered in Pastoral Ministry and Christian Education, and students can earn bachelors and masters degrees.

The Russian seminary is run in collaboration with Russian Leadership Ministries (RLM) in the United States, which provides 90 percent support for students, the academic program, as well as the administration of the school. Ian Chapman, a Baptist World Alliance (BWA) vice president and chairman of the BWA Promotion and Development Committee, is chairman and president of RLM.

Mitskevich has been married to Tatiana, a civil engineer, for 23 years, and they have five children.

A service of Installation and Dedication for the new rector is planned for September 25 at a meeting of the MTS Board of Trustees in Moscow.
The teams cycled for hundreds of kilometers each day, sometimes at speeds of 40 kilometers per hour. In the Chelyabinsk region of Russia, the cyclists set a tour record, covering 210 kilometers in less than seven hours.

Along their journey, the cyclists and support staff accompanying them in motor vehicles stopped in towns and villages to meet with local Christians and to engage in evangelism. The members of the tour led church services, festivals and other events and saw many people accept the Gospel.

Children’s ministry became an emphasis of the tour, as the teams found children especially receptive to the planned events and the presentation of the Gospel message. Workers from a German-sponsored mission group, ‘Light in the East,’ from Vladikavkaz, Russia, accompanied the cyclists for part of the journey. This group performed evangelistic puppet theater and also distributed their widely-read children’s magazine, ‘Tropinka,’ or, ‘The Path,’ to hundreds of eager recipients.

The teams visited children’s homes and schools along the route. In the town of Kurgan, Russia, the members of the tour met with juvenile offenders aged 11-14 who are in a specialized institution as punishment for stealing and other crimes. The team shared a sermon with the teens, gave them Bible story books and prayed with them individually.

Throughout the tour, the teams also had opportunities to minister to journalists who were covering the athletic feat. In Chelyabinsk, the journalists requested copies of the Bible and promised to read them daily. In interviews with the media, the cyclists were able to share about their faith that motivated their participation in the tour. Media representatives, following an evangelistic service in the town square of Tatarsk in Russia, encouraged local believers to take a more active role in the public life of the town.

The cyclists persevered in spite of many physical obstacles. After crossing the Ural Mountains, the group was faced with high temperatures. Large gadflies, heavy rains and roads covered with potholes also created difficulties for the teams at stages of the journey.

Yuri Sipko, president of UECB, praised the cyclists in an interview with a Christian radio station in Russia for their willingness to “Fight their way through on foot or on bicycles to reach even the most remote village and the most despairing person in order to bring them the message of God’s kingdom.”

“They do this so that Russia might be awakened to new life,” he said.
The Neville Callam Story

By Eron Henry

Neville Callam was born into Jamaica’s independent peasantry, the backbone of rural Jamaican life until industrialization took root in the 1950s and 1960s when bauxite companies such as Kaiser, Alpart, Alcan, and Alcoa provided viable employment alternatives to rural farming.

This peasant class, descendants of slaves, judged poor by western, consumerist standards, nevertheless formed a formidable base on which modern Jamaican folk have built their lives. Many of these communities were established in Jamaica’s deep interior, such as Callam’s Gibraltar in St. Ann in the northern part of the island, away from the plantations on which their forebears worked in the dark days of slavery, which was abolished, finally, in 1838.

Such communities, being small and deeply rural, were necessarily and automatically close knit. Each family knew every other family, and most families went to church, where, often times, most children also went to school. This was no chance happenstance.

In the annals of Jamaica’s anti-slavery and emancipation struggles, the Moravian church, and in particular, the Baptist church, took the lead. Names such as William Knibb, Thomas Burchell, and James Philippo, all British Baptist missionaries (all three have churches named after them in Jamaica), come easily to mind as anti-slavery advocates. Sam Sharpe stands tall as the Jamaican slave who, some historians insist, was largely responsible for pushing the British toward granting emancipation in its colonies earlier than planned. Paul Bogle and George William Gordon protested the way the British-appointed leadership in the colony treated the ex-slaves and their descendants. Sharpe, Bogle, and Gordon, all lost their lives in the struggle. At least two, and possibly all three, were Baptist deacons.

The Baptist church in Jamaica, particularly rural Jamaica, was representative of advocacy, agitation, and impatience against oppressive slavery and aggressive colonialism. When the former slave-owners sought to extend their oppression into the emancipation era, the Baptist church stepped in and formed Free Villages, new communities established when pastors and churches bought large tracts of land, divided them into smaller lots, and sold the lots at bargain-basement prices to the ex-slaves to build their homes and to farm. Gibraltar, Callam’s hometown, was one such Free Village.

In these Free Villages, the Baptist church was the center of life and most activities. Wherever a Baptist church existed, there was also a school. With education of slaves and ex-slaves a low priority for the British and their colonialists on the island, this vital service, offered by the church, became the lynchpin that has propelled many rural folk into the professions and into the government service.

Hence the story of Neville Callam. His parents, Dudley and Daisy, were of this strong, fiercely independent, often feisty, rural peasant stock. In this sense at least, the Callam family was a typical small town rural family. Close knit, tight, religious, and with, at minimum, a solid elementary school education partially modeled off the British elitist system. It was an education that, but for the severe shortage of high school spaces at the

Callam childhood home
The Neville Callam Interview

Questions posed to new BWA General Secretary Neville Callam by Eron Henry, BWA Associate Director of Communications, and Editor for Baptist World magazine

What made you accept the position of BWA General Secretary?

NC: I have the strong conviction that hundreds of thousands of Baptists around the world answered the request of the BWA leadership for prayers to accompany the thorough process of search for a successor to Denton Lotz as BWA General Secretary.

When the Search Committee advised me of their decision to recommend me for appointment, I consulted with the members of the two churches that I pastor and they agreed to release me for the anticipated ministry.

The decision of the Search Committee, which operated with excellent leadership, required expertise, adequate representation from the entire Baptist world, and in the context of prayer, together with the concurrence of the BWA General Council in my appointment are what made me accept the position of BWA General Secretary.

What do you uniquely bring to the position of General Secretary?

NC: Because I come to the position believing that this is God's requirement of me, and because I know that when God calls a person to a particular service, the required gifts accompany the call, I approach the task deeply mindful of the enabling that the Holy Spirit provides.

Success in this office, that is, faithfulness to God in the fulfillment of the duties of this office, does not depend on mere human ability. I come to this position mindful of the God who calls and enables, who offers gifts and makes demands. I come to the office trusting in God's enabling and ready to partner others in a work that is not really ours – it is God's!

What is your vision for the BWA?

NC: What is important is not so much the vision that I have for the future of the BWA, but rather our common grasp of the future that God has for the BWA. In other words, the question we raise is not, “What do I want to accomplish? What do I want my special contribution to be?” Instead, the question is, “What does God want to accomplish through the BWA and how may we avail ourselves of the possibilities that are likely to lead to the realization of God's will?”

If God called the BWA into being as a means of galvanizing together the people called Baptists for the sake of service to the world through the church to the glory of God, then the task Baptists have is to discern together the challenges the world faces in the light of the mandate given to the church. Our duty is to discern together how we may address these challenges in the spirit of the Gospel.

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was a privileged place to be, and the Callam siblings, his brothers and sisters included, were among the chosen few.

But it was church that was at the center of life for the Callam family, all 10 of them, parents and eight siblings. Family devotions and church attendance was a given, which Callam described “As normal to us as breathing.”

Callam himself was deeply involved in church from a young age, eventually becoming a Sunday School teacher and a leader in the Youth Fellowship in his early teens. “For me, serving in the church was an exercise in joy,” he said of those early years. “It was very rewarding and very fulfilling.”

But despite his many church activities as a young teen, it was at an evangelistic service that Callam came face to face with the choice of submitting his life to Christ. Confronted with the message and the verse that “Ye must be born again,” Callam made a full surrender to Christ. “I made a public profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord of the church forgave me and offered me the free gift of salvation. I came into the experience of a settled peace.”

Callam’s moment of conversion was also the moment of his call to Christian ministry. Recalling how his life was spared while just a month old when fearsome Hurricane Charlie struck Jamaica in 1951, a story related to him several times by his mother who sheltered him while the hurricane buffeted their home, Callam said, “It was that same evening (of my conversion) that God made clear to me what was driving my desire for Christian service. I came to realize that God had been preparing me for the purpose for which I was preserved during Hurricane Charlie.”

So it was a young, teenage Neville Callam who entered the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) in Kingston, Jamaica, the major institution for theological education and ministerial training for protestant churches in the English-speaking Caribbean, and part of the University of the West Indies (UWI), the major university in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Callam had the distinction of being the first student in the history of the UWI to earn a first class honors degree in theology, the highest level pass given by the university, a feat no other student attained for another decade.

After a very short stint as a young pastor at the historic East Queen Street Baptist Church in Kingston – the oldest Baptist church in the country – Callam went to May Pen in the southern part of the island in the mid 1970s, where he took on the very young congregation at Grace Baptist Church. The church blossomed and grew under his leadership, until Callam felt bold enough, with all the odds stacked against him and his young congregation, to plant a church at Mineral Heights on the outskirts of the town of May Pen. The boldness of Callam in establishing the Mineral Heights mission showed a kind of sober daring that has characterized his life and ministry – never one to
As you know, the BWA Implementation Task Force (ITF), of which I have been a member, has been deliberating the report of the BWA 21st Century Committee. The ITF is in the process of crafting a plan to help the BWA realize the priorities that the present demands. The ITF is taking its task very seriously indeed and, God willing, we expect an outcome to the ITF process that will be commended to the BWA for consideration and adoption.

What I can say, at this stage, is that the BWA will continue to come together for worship and fellowship, to unite for advance in evangelism and mission, to promote relevant theological reflection, to defend human rights and religious liberty and to respond to situations of need through relief and sustainable development.

What are the greatest challenges facing the BWA now and over the next ten years?

NC: The challenges facing the BWA are the common challenges facing our world. This is so because the BWA does not exist for itself, but for Christ and the Church in service to the world.

We are concerned about the spread of the Gospel of Christ that has power to liberate people from the shackles that bind them and set them free for the realization of God’s purposes in their lives. Convinced that God is Creator and that all human beings are made in the image of God, we are concerned about humankind discovering their unity in God and we desire the unity we reflect as Baptists to point to that unity that God gives to the Church as both gift and demand. The BWA will continue to seek and to find effective ways of expressing Christian solidarity in situations of human need and so mirror the love of Christ. This ministry includes both prophetic critique and practical engagement for the betterment of human life to the glory of God.

What are the needs in the world that the BWA is best suited or even uniquely positioned to meet?

NC: Let me mention just two.

Because of the values that are deeply rooted in our tradition as Baptists, the BWA is uniquely placed to work to foster respect for human rights, including religious liberty. As is well known, from the very beginnings of the Baptist movement, we have nurtured a tradition of respect for the rights of others. This treasured value is a priceless feature of our life in both church and society.

This very serious concern for human dignity and rights predisposes Baptists to want to give opportunity for all human beings to come into a transforming encounter with Christ that will invest their lives with solemn purpose through the enjoyment of the gift of eternal life. The BWA is well suited to lead in world evangelization.

If there is one change you could bring about through the BWA, what would it be?

NC: I am called as a servant among the servants of God and my concern is for the needed changes that together we

(Continued on next page)
Callam is, in the best sense of the term, an institutional builder. He knows how to take something from scratch, and to make it into something. Or he knows how to take something that already is, and make it better.

Tarrant Baptist Church is one of the older Baptist congregations in Kingston, but one that had not reached the stature of some of the other churches in Jamaica’s capital. This all changed after Callam moved from May Pen to Kingston in 1989. His sober daring, as evidenced at May Pen with the building of a mission house when there were no resources ready at hand, and in the founding of the Mineral Heights church, came into play at Tarrant.

The congregation at Tarrant grew so much that the church ran out of space for worshippers, resulting in two morning worship services being held; then followed the taxing and exacting task of undertaking a major building redesign, upgrade, and expansion that stretched the faith capacity of the members.

But perhaps Callam’s signature move, showing his willingness and capacity to do the extraordinary, was the decision to launch a radio station in 1997, a move that may have had its genesis from his teen years when, according to him, he became involved in “The little radio station set up as an experiment” at York Castle High School.

The Breath of Change (TBC FM) is the first, and only, congregation-owned radio station in Jamaica. The station was a response to a need for largely uninterrupted, classical, traditional hymnody, appreciated mainly by older church members. The station however, has listenership beyond its intended audience, and rivals the larger, national religious station in Kingston. Callam served as TBC’s general manager, and then as chairman of the station’s board of directors with his son, Gairy, the current general manager.

In 1985, when he first became JBU president, Callam became involved in the work and ministry of the Baptist World Alliance. Callam was influenced by his mentor Azariah McKenzie, the longest serving General Secretary of the JBU, the first BWA Regional Secretary for the Caribbean, as well as a former BWA vice president. Both, incidentally, are from adjoining districts in St. Ann and belonged to the same circuit of churches.

In his more than 20 years as part of the BWA, Callam has been selected to serve on numerous committees, commissions and workgroups, including the Executive Committee and the General Council. He served the international organization as vice president from 2000 to 2005. As an indication of the esteem in which he is held, he is a regular presenter at BWA fora and symposia around the world, as well as at commission meetings.
We face the challenge to be vigilant and perceptive in order to recognize these necessary changes and we must work collaboratively to pursue their implementation. The world’s greatest need is evangelization. We have a vocation to proclaim the Good News of the One who has called us out of darkness into his wonderful light. Nothing is more important than this! The transformation that the Gospel brings about encompasses all of life.

If there is one change you could bring about to the BWA, what would it be?

NC: For more than a hundred years, God has been pleased to work through the BWA to accomplish divine purposes. I am confident that God has not withdrawn God’s presence from us. God will continue to inspire and enable Baptists today to discover and pursue the divine design for the Alliance. For this reason, I do not possess any great concern to change the BWA. My concern is to motivate the members of the BWA to fulfill Christ’s ministry faithfully. In the process, I expect to make my own contribution as God enables me.

What difference can the BWA make in the lives of Baptists?

NC: Baptists rejoice over our evangelical faith, which is grounded in Scripture. When we fellowship with one another, we celebrate our oneness in Christ and we come more intentionally to appreciate the joy and opportunity of belonging to the Baptist tradition. When we collaborate, we encourage and enrich one another and, joined together as one, we are able to provide a united front against the forces of darkness and send forth the Gospel to a world in need of the light of the Good News that is in Christ. United, we find strength to carry the Gospel to the world.

How should Baptists in general and the BWA in particular relate to other Christians and Christian churches?

NC: God knows completely those who belong to him. As Baptists, we are confident of the truth that we believe and we rejoice to know that becoming joint heirs with Christ, we are part of the family of God.

Other Christians exist who are not Baptists. We show as much respect to them and their convictions as we expect of them. Where we can do so with good conscience, we collaborate with them in mission and service in Christ’s name. Meanwhile, we engage with them in respectful dialogue with a view to better understanding our commonalities and our differences, while steadfastly holding fast to the truth that comes through the Word of God. Sincerely, we join with our Lord Jesus in prayer for the realization of the unity of the church.
their father, Dudley, a deacon at the Gibraltar Baptist Church, migrated to England to work, because he “Thought that was the best option open to him, if he was to secure the kind of paid employment that would enable his eight children to get a good education,” Callam said.

Speaking of his mother, the new BWA General Secretary said, “What she was best at was knowing how to love her children, teaching us to believe in ourselves, and helping to cultivate in us spiritual awareness.” Each child in the family was taught how to pray.

In his own family, his children, Gairy and Diedre, now adults, think the world of him, and his wife, Dulcie, adores him.

Neville Callam is a man of faith, never afraid to take on large, and what others deem impossible, challenges. If there was a struggle in his heart as to whether he should allow his name to be submitted to the Search Committee for BWA General Secretary, it was this, “I am a pastor, that’s what I am.” Leaving the pastorate was for him, the most difficult decision.

Close to his heart is the small congregation at Balmagie Baptist Church in inner city Kingston, which he pastors along with Tarrant. Located in one of the most difficult areas of the capital, Balmagie is representative for him of the love of Christ at work in the lives of persons who live in difficult circumstances. Donna Todd Bovell, a member who moved from the area to the opposite end of the city, refused to remove her membership to any of the other Baptist congregations that are closer and much easier to reach. “Balmagie is my home, and Rev. Callam is my pastor,” she said. Stephen Henry, now training for the Christian ministry at UTCWI, and who attends Balmagie, said, “I did not have a father. Rev. Callam became my father.”
Baptists from approximately 56 countries came together in Accra in the West African nation of Ghana for this year’s Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Annual Gathering held July 2-7.

Throughout the week, the 456 registered participants, including approximately 135 from Africa, fellowshipped and worshipped together, discussed issues important to Baptist life, and made decisions about the work of the BWA.

Affinity groups and forums, a new feature of the Gathering introduced last year in Mexico City, were again part of the program. Affinity groups bring together people of similar interests or vocations, such as pastors, denominational CEO’s, women in leadership, under 35’s, and Christian professionals, for a time of networking and sharing about common concerns.


Workgroups, part of the Division of Evangelism and Education, and Commissions, part of the Division of Study and Research, also met during the Gathering. Members of the workgroups made presentations on topics such as Christian education, Islam, and Church Health and Effectiveness. In meetings of the six Commissions, members discussed corruption, reconciliation, slavery, church leadership, and the use of the Bible in the church, among others issues.

BWA committees met throughout the week to conduct the business of the BWA. The BWA General Council made several important decisions at its meeting on Friday, July 6, including the adoption of a new member into the BWA, the Community of Christian Churches in Africa; the presentation of the 2007 Denton and Janice Human Rights Award to Joel and Nora Matwawana for their reconciliation work in Africa; and the election of Neville Callam as the next General Secretary of the BWA.

The Council also adopted seven resolutions dealing with issues ranging from slavery to Darfur, from corruption to Baptist World Aid and the poor. These

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resolutions can be found in their entirety on the News page of the BWA website: www.bwanet.org.

The Annual Gathering provided Baptists from around the world an opportunity to experience the growth and vitality of the church in Africa. Each morning, lively, joyful worship was led by local Baptist Peter Chargley and choirs from local Baptist churches. On Friday evening, the attendees of the Gathering joined with Baptists from throughout Ghana for a special worship service led by the Ghana Baptist Convention at the University of Ghana. A program held on Saturday evening featured Ghanaian culture as local musicians and dancers performed traditional songs and dances.

Baptists worldwide are grateful to the Ghana Baptist Convention and its leadership, General Secretary Kojo Amo and President Steve Asante, as well as the chair of the Local Arrangements Committee, Samuel Otu-Pimpong, for helping to make the Annual Gathering a meaningful experience.
It was with acclaim that Neville Callam was unanimously elected General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance on July 6, 2007, in Accra, Ghana. The Jamaican is the first non-European, non-American, and non-white elected to the high position of General Secretary, one of the most influential and high profile posts in world Christianity.

John Sundquist, chair of the BWA Search Committee, in his introduction of Callam to the BWA General Council as the nominee, hailed him as the “Most seminal theological thinker I have ever met.” Prior to the election, other members of the committee also spoke to Callam’s outstanding attributes as an international churchman worthy of leading the international body that represents more than 36 million baptized believers in more than 200 conventions and unions around the world.

Rachael Tan, Associate Dean of the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary in Taiwan, said, “This is a historic moment. It is with assurance and peace in our hearts that the committee is sure of the new General Secretary.”

President of the Union of Evangelical Churches of Moldova, Valeriu Ghiletchi, stated, “On behalf of the search committee and European Baptists, I would like to commend Neville Callam as the General Secretary. Through prayer and the Holy Spirit, I have come to the conclusion that Neville is to be the next General Secretary.”

Burchell Taylor, though not a member of the search committee, spoke in his capacity as President of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. “This is part of the unfolding of God’s own purpose. A new creative and progressive dimension is being added to Baptist history.”

Callam, in his election response, emphasized the global reach and unity of Baptists. “God is working to make, out of our cultural plurality as Baptists, a wonderful mosaic that models the diversity that enriches and builds up unity, rather than diluting or diminishing it.” The “BWA has become a worldwide body with a truly global reach,” he said. “Every member is God’s gift to the membership as a whole: we all belong together!”

Callam, a former vice president of the BWA and a long standing member of its Executive Committee and General Council, takes up duties in September. He replaces Denton Lotz, who retires after serving as General Secretary since 1988.

The Ghanaians have a tradition of a leader giving an egg to his or her successor to symbolize the fragility of leadership. Following this tradition, Coffey and Lotz passed on to Callam an egg, declaring, “Leadership is fragile, handle with care.”
A major highlight of the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering in Ghana was the Service of Memory and Reconciliation held at the slave castle in Cape Coast on July 5.

One of several of its kind along West Africa’s coast, the castle is a haunting reminder of the horrific nature of the transatlantic slave trade.

The service, held partly to mark the 200th anniversary of the official abolition of the slave trade by the British in 1807, but also in tribute to Ghana as the main ancestral home for descendants of the African Diaspora in the Americas, included apologies, confessions, lamentations, and assurances of forgiveness and pardon.

“We ask forgiveness on behalf of our ancestors, those chiefs who reigned centuries ago and accepted guns and promises in exchange for men, women and children from their villages,” an apology from Ghanaian chiefs, made in October 1995, said. Read by Kojo Amo, General Secretary of the Ghana Baptist Convention, the apology was candid in admitting Africa’s history of slavery, but was careful to make a clear distinction between African slavery and the kind characterized by the transatlantic slave trade. “The practice of slavery dates back thousands of years on the African continent, where it had been a condition of servitude and not, by tradition, one of cruelty. Now, with proof of the barbaric nature of American slavery, the chiefs ask forgiveness.”

The African chiefs’ assessment of African slavery as against slavery in the Americas is supported by scholarship. Akosua Adoma Perbi, head of the Department of History at the University in Ghana, in ‘A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana,’ about slavery before the colonial period, wrote, “The characteristics of a slave as chattel was...not part of the Ghanaian slavery experience. In Ghana, the slave was regarded as a human being and entitled to certain rights and privileges... The position of a slave in Ghana was that of servitude guarded by rights.” She adds that slaves were known to hold important positions in pre-colonial Ghana, including becoming king or chief if a suitable heir was not found after the death of the chief.
Anne de Vries, General Secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches in the Netherlands, apologized on the behalf of the Dutch, who were early initiators of the African slave trade. “On behalf of the Board and staff of the Dutch Baptist Union I want to apologize because of the bitter history our country was involved in, trading African people as slaves. In fact, part of the wealth in which we are living in our country originates from that trade. The people of Africa and their descendants (and others) have greatly suffered from these malicious actions.”

Executive Coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Daniel Vestal, made confession on behalf of Americans. “We confess to you, O God, our sins of enslaving human beings. We as a nation and as a people are guilty and responsible before you for exploiting, degrading and enslaving Africans. We repent and repudiate this historic evil. We also ask forgiveness from Africans and African Americans who have been cruel victims of our sin.”

Five descendants of slaves from the Caribbean and the United States lamented, “Our fore parents were driven from their homes, gathered in places marked by the smell of death. Transported like cargo across the Atlantic Ocean in ships packed like sardine cans, they suffered; many died, some committed suicide…. Today, we endure painful memories; the burden is hard to bear.”

Fittingly, the ‘Assurance of Pardon’ was read by Neville Callam, new BWA General Secretary and a descendant of slaves. “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” And in further affirmation of forgiveness, he declared, “Despite the pains whose memory still causes the soul to ache, we have learnt from you, gracious God, to forgive…. Enable us to forgive others as you have forgiven us.”

The service was preceded by a tour of the facilities by the approximately 500 attendees who were taken on a journey into dungeons where up to 200 men were held in one small room with little ventilation and no sanitation facilities, and in which human waste was as much as two feet deep. They were shown the condemned cell, a much smaller room where up to 60 ‘weak’ or ‘rebellious’ Africans, at a time, were kept until they all died before being dumped into the sea. Scratches and marks made by teeth and fingernails made by Africans dying in agony characterize the walls and floors of this room. Guides told stories of young girls and women being raped, repeatedly, by Europeans, while being held in the female dungeons.

Historical theologian Cawley Bolt of Jamaica, in a paper presented at a meeting of the Baptist Heritage and Identity Study Commission in Ghana, said, “The transatlantic trade in African slaves and the institution of slavery in the Western world constitutes one of the major blots on the history of the so-called enlightened peoples of Europe and the United States of America.”

Callam, conscious of the context in which his election as BWA General Secretary took place, said in his acceptance speech after the election in Ghana, “My ancestors were born somewhere on this great continent of Africa. They were rounded up and shipped to the West Indies, where they endured many years of enslavement. Then God emancipated both them and their oppressors.”

The song ‘And can it be,’ used during the Service of Memory and Reconciliation, gave new meaning to the experience of enslavement, liberation and forgiveness that touched so many at the castle,

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quick’ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed thee.
Along the coast of Ghana, there are many children who have been sold to fishermen to work as child laborers. The children spend their time swimming and diving during fishing trips on the high seas and are sometimes recruited for dangerous dives that have resulted in drowning.

The Baptist women’s group in Ghana took notice of these neglected children. The national Women’s Missionary Union of Ghana (WMUG) and the Adangbe Association of the Ghana Baptist Convention, concerned that the children were not receiving any type of education, joined together to create the Prampram School.

The school began with the women gathering the children and teaching them the Word of God, and has developed into a school of 250 students. A shed was donated and is partitioned into classrooms during school hours. Students receive a balanced meal, which for most of them is the only balanced meal they receive in a day. The school provides a better future for the students, and also teaches the students that they are created in the image of God and are persons of worth.

In addition to their ministries to schoolchildren, the Baptist women of Ghana assist girls who have been released from slavery.

In several regions of Ghana, Trokosi, an old cultural practice of sexual slavery, still exists. Fearing the wrath of the gods, it is believed that offences ranging from petty theft to murder can be atoned for by sending a member of the family to a fetish shrine to serve as a slave. Those subjected to slavery are usually young virgin girls who become the wives of fetish priests and suffer many abuses.

The Baptist Convention played a key role in the campaign advocating against Trokosi that led to the passing of a law banning the practice in 1998, and the release of several slaves. However, the practice continues because of ineffective enforcement of the law and shrines that operate underground.

Slaves who are released from servitude are often left stranded without resources, not being welcomed back home due to superstitious reasons. To assist with the integration of released slaves back into their communities, the Ghana Baptist Convention created the Baptist Vocational Training Center at Frankadua in the eastern region of Ghana. The center provides three-year vocational training for the girls, teaching them commercial skills like dressmaking, kente weaving, catering, crocheting, carpentry and batik making. At the end of the training, the girls are given some seed money and equipment, some of which is donated by the WMUG. The girls leave the center with the ability to start their own small business, and thus the capacity to be economically independent.

Each delegate who attended the BWA Annual Gathering in Accra received a welcome gift of a kente cloth weaving made by girls at the Vocational Training Center.

A third ministry of the Ghana Baptist women is among young widows in the northern part of Ghana. Young girls are contracted into marriages with old polygamous men, who, after a few years, die, leaving the women and children extremely poor.

The Bolgatanga Association brought together 300 widows to weave baskets to generate income, and also to learn basic agricultural skills to help provide food for their families. The WMUG sold the baskets at their annual national conference to help support the ministry.

Through the ministry of the Baptist women in Ghana, the lives of children and women are being touched by the love of Christ.

Patsy Davis and Lauren Weaver contributed to this story

Caption
Reconciliation after Genocide

“You can’t exploit your neighbor and say I am secure.”

With such words of wisdom, Joao Matwawana shared his work and ministry of reconciliation at a forum held during the Annual Gathering held in Accra, Ghana. Matwawana, along with wife, Nora, is the recipient of the 2007 Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award. The award is given in recognition of “Significant and effective activities to secure, protect, restore or preserve the human rights as they are stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

Speaking on the topic, ‘Peacemaking in a time of genocide,’ Matwawana, an educator from Angola who later became an ordained minister and missionary, detailed his work among refugees in camps in Africa, such as those who fled the meltdown in Rwanda in the mid-1990s that led to the slaughter of almost one million persons.

The refugees “Needed a message of hope, repentance, and forgiveness,” Matwawana, who also met with a key rebel leader to help end a similar but smaller conflict in Burundi, said. His work was done in the face of danger – at risk to life and safety – and was conducted in the midst of suspicion, distrust, thirst for vengeance, and hatred. Guns, and many who committed gross atrocities, were in the camps. Evangelistic meetings were held in four camps that helped, he said, to reduce tension and violence. More than 10,000 persons accepted Christ in one week, Matwawana asserted.

In Kigali, Rwanda, pastors who heard of his work in the camps issued “The Kigali Macedonian call, not by vision, but by fax,” the now retired missionary said. Workshops on peace, healing and reconciliation were held between Tutsi and Hutu pastors with lessons often presented in drama, role playing and story telling. Eventually, “Traditional enemies were worshipping, praying, talking and listening to each other in face-to-face contact.”

Though retired, Matwawana continues his work of reconciliation. Now living in Canada and a Peace and Reconciliation Consultant with Canadian Baptist Ministries, he is working with the three Baptist conventions in his home country, Angola, that are members of the BWA. A series of training seminars on ‘National Reconciliation and Moral and Civic Education’ were held in February and March of this year to help prepare Baptists in Angola for general elections scheduled for 2008 and 2009. Topics covered included unity, cooperation, prayer, and the role of Angolan Baptists in national reconciliation.

Matwawana and wife, Nora, received the Denton and Janice Lotz human rights award for their pivotal role in reconciliation and peace efforts in Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Angola since the 1970s.

“The most prominent physical monument to Nora Matwawana’s investment of herself in training African women is located in Kivu Province of Eastern Congo—DRC. It is the Centre Sociale Mama Nora, which grew out of Nora’s experiences in Angola, Western Congo, Kenya, Canada and India,” wrote John Keith in ‘Wars Are Never Enough: The Joao Matwawana Story,’ published in 2006.

At the forum in Ghana, participants shared situations of conflict and reconciliation work in their own setting, such as in the Niger Delta in Nigeria, Liberia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
The Emerging Leaders Network (ELN), a brainchild of Baptist World Alliance President David Coffey, had its first meetings in Accra, Ghana, during the BWA Annual Gathering.

ELN members are drawn from all six continental federations of the BWA – Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, North America and Latin America – and are mostly Baptist leaders in their 20s and 30s. More than 30 of these leaders were gathered, in the words of the BWA President, to be part of “An intentional program for developing…Baptist leaders in a global diplomatic corps, in the service of the King and his Kingdom.”

These leaders, Coffey hopes, will form a corps from which future leaders of the BWA will emerge, and who, in turn, will inspire other young Baptist leaders to serve the worldwide family of Baptists. “If we are truly a global organization then we will want to be intentional about developing emerging leaders. Much of what happens is informal and haphazard and I want to see intentionality for developing leaders,” said Coffey.

In light of this, a program, slated to run until the 2010 Congress in Honolulu, Hawaii, is being developed. This program will, among other things, focus on a unique leadership development program customized for the BWA; a theology of spiritual leadership with special attention to global Christian leadership; as well as conflict resolution and mediation processes. ELN members are expected to contribute their own insights, concerns, and interests to help shape the program.

It is the vision of the BWA President that ELN members will form their own small group of emerging leaders in their home country. “I also hope the members of the ELN will create a peer support group and keep in regular touch with other members of the ELN through website discussion groups and blogs.”

ELN members, in thanking the BWA leadership for the opportunity afforded them, are requesting that they be included in the broader BWA family both formally and informally through commissions and committees, as well as be involved in the planning of the Annual Gatherings and Living Water Conferences. Living Water is a series of evangelistic conferences and leadership training seminars sponsored by the BWA and held around the world.

During the meetings in Ghana, other leaders of the BWA met with the ELN, including retiring General Secretary Denton Lotz and new General Secretary Neville Callam. Participants in the ELN program took part in various activities held during the week of meetings in Ghana, including devotions, forums, and commission and committee meetings. On Wednesday, July 4, a number of participants made presentations to the Church Leadership Study Commission on ‘Leadership, Authority and Power within a Baptist Polity.’

ELN members include men and women and lay and ordained leaders, some of whom are in full time ministry, while others are professionals who serve their local church, association, convention or union in a voluntary capacity.
The Chinese proverb, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish and he will eat for a lifetime,” is being realized in the Baptist Convention of Mozambique’s agriculture project.

Baptist World Aid, in partnership with Baptists in Mozambique, is empowering a community of more than 300 people by helping them to end hunger and achieve food security.

In the first step of the project, young adults and older women were trained how to produce vegetables for sale in order to contribute to their family’s financial stability. This knowledge has opened new doors of opportunity. For example, one young man, Antonio João, now has the resources to realize his dream of becoming a serious farmer.

Forty five farmers were taught to produce sesame and were given one hectare of land per family, estimated to produce a half ton of sesame seed, in the second stage of the agriculture project. Now, instead of toiling over the land to produce mass amounts of maize, which cannot be grown in sufficient amounts for survival without the aid of expensive equipment, these farmers have the opportunity and land to grow a much more lucrative crop.

General Secretary of the Baptist Convention of Mozambique, Manuel Moises Quembo, reports that with the income generated from selling the cash crop, “A farmer can buy two bicycles, which helps their movement to the market places, health posts, to school, etc. They are also able to buy exercise books for their children, soap, and clothes and they will not have to sell their maize which they produce for food.

“The project is in a very poor setting, where most people live in extreme poverty. These people are slowly leaving the line of extreme poverty and gaining acceptable human living standards.”

As for the third step in the project, Baptist World Aid is in the process of literally fulfilling the Chinese proverb by sending funds for the training of fish production as well as for the initial setup cost of building necessary water tanks. As a result, the community will no longer have to spend money on costly fish from the sea, as it will be able to provide the nutritional sustenance locally.

The Baptist Convention of Mozambique’s agriculture project is an example of how ensuring that people have adequate food holistically improves lives. Around the world, Baptist World Aid sees the positive changes brought about in communities when basic needs like hunger are addressed.

October is Hunger Month and BWAid is encouraging all Baptists to support efforts to end extreme hunger and poverty. Ending hunger produces good fruit.

**Ending Hunger Produces Good Fruit**

*Baptist World Aid*  
**Hunger Month**  
**October 2007**

For more information go to www.bwanet.org/bwaid
Darci Dusilek, former president of the Brazilian Baptist Convention, died on August 16 after suffering a massive heart attack while speaking at a Christian university in Rio de Janeiro.

Dusilek, former pastor of two leading Baptist churches in the city of Rio, was a sought-after speaker and preacher, writer and author. He was professor of Systematic Theology, Greek and New Testament at the South Brazil Baptist Theological Seminary in Rio. In addition to his seminary teaching responsibilities, he was also the Director of the School of Theology of the University of the Greater Rio Area (UNIGRANRIO). For many years, he served as the Executive Director for Brazil of World Vision.

A memorial service was held on August 17 at the South Brazil Baptist Theological Seminary in Rio.

Dusilek, who was 66 years old, is survived by his wife Nancy, a son, Sergio Dusilek and his wife Liliana, a daughter Heloisa Helena, and other family members.

Sam Fadeji

Sam Fadeji, former two term president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, died in Ogbomosho, Nigeria, on August 13 from a sudden illness.

Fadeji was a former general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, and was professor of Old Testament at the Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho.

The Nigerian Baptist leader was active in the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). A current member of the Baptist Worship and Spirituality Study Commission and the Academic and Theological Education Workgroup, Fadeji previously served on the Congress Program Committee, the Study and Research Executive Committee, the BWA Executive Committee and the General Council. He was a speaker at the Baptist Youth World Conference in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1993.

Fadeji attended the BWA’s Annual Gathering in Ghana in July 2007.

Fadeji is survived by his wife, Elizabeth.

Gennadi Konstantinovich Kryuchkov, president of International Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (ICECB) in Russia, died on July 15 after a long illness. He was 80 years old.

Kryuchkov led the approximately 20,000-member ICECB since 1965, which broke from the larger Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (RUECB), a member body of the Baptist World Alliance, in 1961. Exiled and imprisoned for his faith, the Russian Baptist leader was conscripted into the Soviet Army in 1943 at age 17, and was not released until 1951. He was imprisoned by the Soviets in 1966, along with Georgi Vins, another ICECB leader, and was released in 1969. He spent the next 20 years in hiding as an exile and refugee.

Yuri Sipko, President of RUECB, paid tribute to Kryuchkov. “Gennadi Konstantinovich gave his whole life to the service of God. He was confronted in his life with more than a few trials and tests, which he mastered with honor, dignity and a deep faith. He remained true to Christ and his church. The brotherhood of Evangelical Christians-Baptists has lost a worthy brother, a loyal servant, blessed leader and loving father. We all grieve his passing.”

Kryuchkov was buried on July 21 in Tula, an industrial city in the European part of Russia, approximately 100 miles south of Moscow. He is survived by nine children.

J. Ralph McIntyre, former Baptist World Alliance Director of Evangelism & Education and Study & Research, died on July 12 at his home in Tullahoma, Tennessee, after a long illness. He was 82 years old.

McIntyre joined the BWA staff at a difficult time in the history of the organization, after the tragic passing of BWA General Secretary Gerhard Claas, who died in a motor vehicle accident in California in 1988. McIntyre took on the portfolios held by Denton Lotz who was named to replace Claas as BWA General Secretary, and served for two years, until 1990.

“Ralph came and immediately began a remarkable two years of service to Baptists around the world,” Lotz said in his tribute to
McIntyre, whom he described as “Not only a colleague but a close personal friend.”

In speaking of McIntyre’s contribution to the BWA, Lotz said, “He was instrumental in planning the BWA Congress in 1990 in Korea. His conference at Ruschlikon in 1989 on Bible study material helped prepare Eastern Europeans for freedom and the printing of their own literature.”

BWA President David Coffey said of McIntyre, “He was a global Christian who never lost the vision of the unfinished task of reaching the lost for Christ. We look back with thanksgiving to God for Ralph’s life of service.”

After retiring from the BWA, McIntyre continued his support for the organization. He was, up until the time of his death, an active member of the Promotion and Development Committee.

He is a former president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and was pastor of the Brainerd Baptist Church in Chattanooga.

McIntyre loved the arts, particularly the chorales of Johann Sebastian Bach. An avid photographer, his pictures often appeared in BWA publications and on its website.

Just months before his passing, the retired pastor spoke of his love, affection and support for the BWA. “To be able to have a part in a worldwide ministry like the BWA is a blessing in itself.”

In encouraging others to make the BWA part of their planned giving, he said, “To have a way of being a part of the BWA) long after we meet Jesus in heaven is a many fold blessing. We can continue to touch lives worldwide after we die by including BWA in our wills. Join me in both giving and receiving this blessing.”

Predeceased by his wife and a son, he leaves a son, Pierce, and two daughters, Candy and Gigi, and 10 grandchildren.

His funeral service was held at King’s Cross Baptist Church, in Tullahoma, Tennessee, on Sunday, July 15. General Secretary Lotz delivered the sermon.

Jose Missena

Jose Missena, pastor of Villa Morra Baptist Church in Asuncion, Paraguay, and former BWA regional secretary of the Union of Baptists of Latin America (UBLA), died on August 5 at the age of 76.

Missena served as the first general secretary of UBLA, one of six regional bodies of the Baptist World Alliance.

“As the first General Secretary of UBLA, Jose Missena taught Baptists of Latin America to work together for Christ and His Kingdom,” said Denton Lotz, retiring BWA General Secretary. “He was a great preacher, Bible Study leader, evangelist, and encourager.”

“The Baptist World Alliance is proud to have had him as one of its regional secretaries. Jose made Baptists of the world aware of the spiritual dynamic and depth of Baptist work in Latin America.”

“Jose was never ashamed of the Gospel. With a deep understanding of the psychology of the Latin American soul, he encouraged Baptists in Latin America to take up the mantle of evangelism and pastoral care.”

“We send our profound sympathy to Baptists of Paraguay who have lost a beloved leader and friend. May the peace and comfort of our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ give all of you hope and courage to continue to work for the evangelization of the nations.”

In addition to pastoring Villa Morra Baptist Church for the past 25 years, Missena was involved in radio ministry, preaching in both Spanish and Guarani. He also frequently visited mission points in the interior of Paraguay.

Missena is survived by wife, Betty; three children, Esteban, Lady and Eliseo; and ten grandchildren.

Norman Adrian Wiggins

Norman Adrian Wiggins, chancellor and former president of Campbell University in Buies Creek, North Carolina in the United States, died on August 1.

Wiggins had a long and acclaimed career as a professor, attorney, college administrator and Baptist leader. He was one of only two Baptist college presidents ever to serve as president of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention.

A staunch Baptist World Alliance (BWA) supporter, Wiggins served on the Academic and Theological Education Workgroup of the BWA from 1990 to 1995. Denton Lotz, retiring BWA General Secretary, said of Wiggins, “During difficult days we could always count on Norman Wiggins for supporting the Baptist family around the world through the work of the BWA.”

President of Campbell University for 36 years, from 1967-2003, he engineered many developments at the school, including the establishment of five professional schools, the schools of law, business, education, pharmacy and divinity. He also led in the creation of international educational programs and initiated a partnership between Campbell University and Tunku Abdul Rahman College in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, that now spans more than 25 years.

Wiggins was remembered at his funeral on August 5 as hundreds of students, supporters and friends shared how they had been influenced by his powerful example as president of the university. US Congressman from North Carolina Bob Etheridge said, “If you look around at the people who are here, you will notice that in life and death, Dr. Wiggins inspired people.”

Lotz expressed condolences to the Wiggins family and the university on behalf of Baptists around the world. “[Dr. Wiggins] was a close friend and encourager. Under Dr. Wiggins’ leadership, Campbell University became a university of great renown. His focus was always on helping students and faculty do their best for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom.”

Wiggins is survived by his wife, Mildred “Millie” Harmon Wiggins.
The Baptist World Alliance 2010 World Congress, set for Honolulu, Hawaii, will have as its theme, ‘Hear the Spirit.’ The logo for the event, submitted from Indonesia and chosen from more than 20 entries received from around the world, reflects the theme and the unique Hawaiian location and is currently being refined.

The Bible study sessions, central to all congresses, will focus on Jesus’ manifesto in Luke 4:18-19, and will speak to the person and work of the Spirit, Jesus the anointed one, as well as spiritual and physical poverty, captivity and blindness, and the issue of freedom and justice.

More than 15 topics are under consideration for various focus groups, broadly categorized under leadership, such as women in leadership and the authority and style of leadership; mission, on such subjects as ministry among Muslims and the church in a secular society; lifestyle issues that speak to materialism and balancing life and family; and international affairs and concerns such as peacemaking, persecution and religious freedom, and human trafficking. Worship, aid and development, and ethics, such as bioethics, are also under consideration.

A special welcoming ceremony unique to Hawaii is being planned, and there are hopes that during the congress worship will be brought close to the people of Hawaii through open stages. There will either be a concert or a parade from the convention center, where the meetings are to be held, to the beach.

Details of the 20th BWA World Congress were discussed by the Congress Program Committee at meetings during the 2007 Annual Gathering in Accra, Ghana. The committee is chaired by John Upton, Executive Director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

At an earlier meeting of the committee in March 2007, the desire was expressed that opportunities be afforded for the approximately 15,000 persons expected to attend to have Bible study sessions in their own languages, and that as much opportunity as is possible be given for interaction between participants across cultural, national, and ethnic lines.

Further details of the 2010 Congress, such as a budget, will be discussed in March 2008, in Honolulu.

The last world congress, celebrating the centenary of the Baptist World Alliance, was held in Birmingham, England, in 2005. BWA world congresses are held every five years.

Caption
Steve Asante, Kojo Amo and Samuel Otu-Pimpong are some of the names that Baptists around the world will recall affectionately after the Annual Gathering held in Accra, Ghana, in July 2007. These Baptist leaders assembled and led an efficient Local Arrangements Committee that helped make the Accra experience the rich blessing that it was for the 456 registered participants.

Many of us will not soon forget what happened to us when, on July 5, we toured the Cape Coast Slave Castle. The tour evoked feelings of shock and disgust, of guilt and shame. Tour guides told us about the worship services slave holders attended in a space directly above one of the dungeons in which captured people were incarcerated. This, as the prisoners experienced the first throes of their dehumanization that was to continue after their passage through the ‘door of no return’ to the horror of the Middle Passage and the terror of life in chattel slavery in the so-called New World.

Nor will we soon forget the moving worship experience we had, after listening to the story of the instructive error of people who, regarding themselves as Christians, participated shamelessly in the goings on at the Slave Castle!

At the very heart of the service were three actions. Many of our brothers and sisters were willing to confess their complicity, or that of their forebears, in the crime against humanity that slavery was. Others were honest enough to own up to their status as direct or indirect beneficiaries of the shameful trade in enslaved persons. Still others were ready to reach out in forgiveness in respect of those whose ancestors had so brutally violated the dignity of their forebears. They appreciated the fact that the confessors understood the relationship between underdevelopment in the Two-thirds world today and the sinful arrangements slavery helped to institutionalize.

It was on the day following our visit to the Slave Castle that a meeting of the General Council convincingly affirmed the discernment of the BWA General Search Committee regarding the person to succeed the great Denton Lotz, now General Secretary Emeritus of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

The unanimous approval of the General Council and the scores of letters that Baptists from all over the world wrote to pledge their cooperation and support have been a rich source of encouragement to us. We are grateful that the all-seeing God will take note of all who keep their promise of prayers on behalf of my wife, Dulcie, and me and will reward them.

As I indicated when I replied to the election in Accra, my appointment marks the dawning of “A great new day” in the BWA. It signals that “The BWA has become a worldwide body with a truly global reach. In this Alliance, every member is God’s gift to the membership as a whole: we belong together!”

We suggested that our appointment shows how “God is working to make, out of our cultural plurality as Baptists, a wonderful mosaic that models that diversity which enriches and builds up our unity, rather than diluting or diminishing it.” We also claimed that our election points to God “Calling on Baptists everywhere to remember that we have a home in the BWA and that, on account of this, we have an inescapable obligation to play our part in making this home a dynamic space where we cherish everyone – none excepted – and where all members contribute according to their ability, in a spirit of authentic partnership.”

We renew the call for all Baptists to “Reaffirm with confidence our unwavering conviction that it is in the providence of God that this BWA came into being in 1905” and has become “A privileged instrument of the worldwide Baptist movement” in which there is space for every Baptist.

We remain convinced that, God guiding and enabling us, faithful Baptist people praying for and supporting us, and the team of gifted staff in the BWA Center in Falls Church, Virginia, USA, co-operating with us, we will help advance the aims of the Alliance. We will “Go forward determined to contribute to the realization of the goals of the BWA: to come together for worship and fellowship, to unite for advance in evangelism and mission, to promote relevant theological reflection, to defend religious liberty and human rights, and to respond to situations of grave need through relief and sustainable development.”

How reassuring it is that, because of the unchanging nature of the God whom we serve, we can rest assured of rich success as a new phase begins in the history of the world Baptist movement. Rightly, we affirm, in the oft-repeated words of Adoniram Judson, that “The future is as bright as the promises of God.”

FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY
Neville Callam

A New Phase Begins
North Americans support the BWA

Billy Graham, Founder, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association:
“...I enthusiastically endorse the BWA and pledge my support. I know of few organizations across the world which minister as effectively as the Baptist World Alliance. At times, in fact, it has been the only channel through which assistance could be given to churches in hostile countries.”

Coretta Scott King, Founding President, Chair & CEO, The King Center:
“...It is gratifying to see so many of my Baptist brothers and sisters from so many nations, united...to put an end to racism in the world.”

Timothy George, Executive Editor, Christianity Today:
“...It is the best arena I know for sharing a united Baptist witness for Christ around the world. For a hundred years now, the BWA has lifted high the name of Jesus as a light to the nations. May this light continue to shine for generations to come.!”

Gardner Taylor, Pastor Emeritus, Concord Baptist Church of Christ, Brooklyn, NY:
“The Baptist World Alliance, since its first President, the incomparable McClaren, has been the unifying and ennobling fellowship of Baptists of the world, to the great honor of Jesus Christ.”

The Baptist World Alliance is a fellowship of more than 200 Baptist conventions and unions comprising a membership of more than 38 million baptized believers.

The BWA:  - unites Baptists worldwide  - responds to people in need  - promotes theological reflection  - leads in world evangelism  - defends human rights