Celebrating 400 Years of Baptist Life
BWA Appoints New Regional Secretary for North America

George Bullard of South Carolina in the United States has been appointed Baptist World Alliance regional secretary for North America and elected as general secretary for the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF).

Bullard assumed his new responsibilities on September 1, and will be a BWA representative to churches, conventions, unions, and other Baptist organizations in the United States and Canada. He will also have day to day responsibilities for the affairs of the NABF, one of six regional fellowships of the BWA.

Until his new appointment, Bullard, who is a member of the BWA Commission on Church Leadership, was recording secretary for NABF, beginning in 2008.

He is currently a ministry partner and strategic coordinator with The Columbia Partnership, a partnership of six religious organization consultants and coaches, and he served as project director of a Lilly Endowment project on Sustaining Pastoral Excellence.

Bullard held several positions with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, serving as associate executive director-treasurer from 2003-2006, executive coach for Lake Hickory Learning Communities from 2001-2006, and director of the Hollifield Leadership Center between 2001 and 2003. He also worked with the former Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and was a church planter during the 1970s and 1980s.

He has had visiting professorships at several seminaries and theological schools in South Dakota, South Carolina, California, Kentucky, and in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Bullard’s books include Pursuing the Full Kingdom Potential of Your Congregation, Every Congregation Needs a Little Conflict, and Real Denominations Serve Congregations.

Bullard attended Mars Hill College in North Carolina and holds masters and doctoral degrees from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

He and wife, Betty, have an adult son and daughter.

COVER
Mass Baptism at Wiltlesforde, a 19th century British artist’s impression of the baptism of 48 people on a May morning in 1760. Courtesy of Cambridgeshire Archives & Local Studies, Maynard Collection VIII R58/5/3, by permission of Saffron Walden Museum

Unless otherwise noted, photos in the issue are by BWA staff.
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FROM THE PRESIDENT
David Coffey

Leadership Legacy

It is one of the irrefutable laws of leadership that a leader’s lasting value is measured by succession. Leadership succession is a key responsibility of Christian ministry and our lasting bequest should be a generation of gifted people.

The training of the twelve disciples was the priority of Jesus which is sufficient motivation for us to adopt this law of legacy in our own mission strategies. There are sparkling examples in all parts of the Baptist world where older leaders have recognized their responsibility to plan for a succession of gifted leaders. But often the reality at grassroots tells a different story. When I meet emerging leaders and they share their vision for leadership development, their top seven complaints read something like this:

1. “I am approaching my 40’s but feel I am treated like an inexperienced teenager – especially by church leaders who have known me since childhood.”
2. “I am told there is not enough snow on the mountain, as they point to my inexperienced head with no gray hairs!”
3. “Because I have spent a number of years in theological education, I am seen as a threat to older leaders who did not have the opportunities of further education.”
4. “I am a pioneer by nature and by gifting and any visionary ideas I put forward are either squashed immediately, or they are initially welcomed and then get lost in the system and I never hear of them again.”
5. “I have never met my senior leader in a social context. I have never been invited to his or her home. He or she has never taken me out for meal. All our meetings are in an office setting with my senior leader sitting behind a desk.”
6. “I would love to be trusted by older leaders with something significant in ministry. I would want to be supported in the project they are delegating and have the opportunity for some honest feedback and evaluation, but I long to be set free and not always feel another hand hovering over the tiller of the boat.”
7. “I long for someone to mentor and befriend me. Someone who will stretch me to stir up the gifts within me and provoke me to take risks with the opportunities of mission ministry. Someone who will encourage me to be prayerful and reflective. Someone to whom I can be accountable. Someone who will ask me where I am in my walk with Jesus, how my relationships are going and how I am spending my money. Someone I can admire for their character, wisdom, knowledge and experience. Someone who will remind me that God loves me as a person before he loves me as a leader.”

If our response to reading this list of complaints is, “I don’t have the time to work with an apprentice, my own ministry is so demanding,” then we may have forgotten that God gifts leaders to produce more leaders intentionally, and this will involve time consuming discipleship formation.

William Abraham says the ministry of making disciples is not just a moral imperative, it’s a missionary imperative. Hosts of people struggle with the life of discipleship because of the incompetence of the church in the art of making disciples. He talks about the intrinsic grammar of initiation and suggests if we focus merely on the ABC of the gospel at the expense of the rest, we will have a generation of believers who never get beyond the first steps of Christian existence.

Those who choose to invest in discipleship formation and leadership development discover an immense fruitfulness of their leadership. Investing in people enhances their gifting; it improves the quality of their own leadership; it ensures the continuation of their own ministry.

Whenever I attend a thanksgiving service for an older leader, I am impressed by the testimony of those who have been discipled and developed under their leadership. The litany of appreciation always includes the following tributes:

“They trusted me with leadership responsibilities.”
“They took risks with my ministry.”
“They were never threatened by my gifts.”
“They were an inspiring coach and expected me to exceed them in leadership excellence.”
“Above everything my mentor was a friend and a fellow-disciple of Jesus Christ.”

Growing leaders has been likened to the development of a fruitful tree. The growth of healthy leaders is enhanced when they are carefully cultivated, strategically located and lovingly tended.

Wherever we serve, we should be concerned about succession.

It is called leadership legacy.
There are plans to expand the mission field and to include more young people as missionaries. In January, the youth department of the All-Ukrainian Union sent two missionaries to some of the former Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, and it will send two more families in September.

“Our union has 40,000 young people,” said Unguryan, who is also the chair of the Euro-Asian Baptist Federation Youth Committee. “Today the young are leading the way, we are now the avant-garde,” explained the 29-year-old Baptist youth leader, an elected member of the Ukrainian parliament.

In August 2008, more than 3,000 young people from 19 countries met in Odessa, the fourth largest city in Ukraine. Ukraine, which gained its independence following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, has one of the largest Baptist constituencies on the European continent. The All-Ukrainian Union has more than 2,800 churches and church plants, and more than 135,000 members. The Brotherhood of Independent Baptist Churches and Ministries of Ukraine, also a Baptist World Alliance member body, has approximately 130 churches and more than 11,000 baptized believers.

The small Christian community in Pakistan has been experiencing increasing difficulties as a result of anti-Christian violence and the Pakistani government’s war against Taliban fighters.

On July 30, hundreds of members of Sipah-e-Sahaba, a Muslim organization banned by Pakistan’s government, torched Christian homes and killed Christians in the Punjabi city of Gojra and in the nearby village of Korian for allegedly defiling a copy of the Koran, the Muslim holy book.

According to Pervaz Khokhar, a Baptist pastor in Pakistan, between 60 and 70 Christian homes were torched. “Many children and women [are] feared burnt to death,” he reported. Another pastor told the BWA by email that at least nine Christians “were burnt alive,” four of whom were children.

Khokhar said that a young boy, who was present at a wedding ceremony, was accused by Muslims of burning “pages of the Holy Koran.” Christian elders and Muslim leaders met to diffuse the tension, clarifying that the accused had not burned the Koran, said Khokhar. However, on the night of July 30, announcements were made over loudspeakers at mosques in Korian and other nearby villages “to gather and teach [a] lesson to infidel Christians who are protecting [the person] accused of blasphemy, burning [the] holy pages of [the] Koran.”

Mobs gathered shouting, Kill the infidels,” and started setting fire to Christian homes. Khokhar told the BWA that this was the second incident in recent weeks, following on a similar incident on July 1 after a mob attacked some 100 houses belonging to Christians in Kasur District in Punjab province, injuring many persons after a blasphemy charge.

Khokhar asked for prayer from the worldwide family of Baptists for Christians who suffered attacks. “These people need your prayers,” he said in his email. “They need our support and prayers. Please remember them in your prayers and if possible support them.”

Another Baptist pastor informed the BWA that many Christians in northern Pakistan have been displaced by the fighting between government forces and the Taliban, a number of whom were in camps. Approximately 160 Christian families were among the displaced. Some families have since returned home, but are still in need of food, clothing, medication, and proper shelter, as houses and other property have been badly damaged or destroyed in the fighting.

There are an estimated 2.8 million Christians in the Muslim-majority country of more than 180 million people.
Baptists in Taiwan and around the world are assisting victims of Typhoon Morakot, which made landfall in the southern part of the island just before midnight on Friday, August 7.

Several hundred persons are confirmed dead and at least 600 people are missing. In Xiaolin, a mountain village with 1,300 residents, the number of persons who died is estimated to be as high as 380 after most of the houses were buried by a massive mudslide.

Joseph Tseng Ching-En, General Secretary of the Chinese Baptist Convention (CBC) in Taiwan, reported to the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) that “most [of the victims] were swallowed and buried by landslides.” Many of them, he said, were overwhelmed by a river that had flooded and overflowed its banks.

At least six Baptists have died, including five members from one Baptist family, while another Baptist member, a police officer, went missing after trying to rescue persons affected by the typhoon.

Tseng told the BWA that 15 Baptist churches are in the disaster zone. In the first few weeks after the storm, most of these churches could not be contacted by the convention due to blocked roads, bridges that were destroyed, and the loss of electricity and telephone services. Churches that could be reached were found to be badly damaged or destroyed.

The CBC has 209 churches and more than 14,000 members.

Baptist World Aid (BWAid), the relief and development arm of the BWA, is coordinating the global Baptist response and made an initial donation of US$10,000 to CBC as support for the relief work currently being undertaken by the Taiwan convention. Other assistance came from conventions and churches in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and the United States. Baptists in Taiwan made donations, organized relief teams, and ran a camp for children who were affected by the storm.

“We have been watching with concern the traumatic impact that this typhoon has wrought on your country,” Paul Montacute, director of BWAid, wrote to Tseng. “On behalf of David Coffey, the BWA president, and Neville Callam, the BWA general secretary, I send to you, your convention and your country, our deepest condolences at this time.”

“We express deepest thanks from our hearts,” Tseng wrote to the BWA in response to assistance offered by Baptists. “We can feel the love which is based on the love from our Heavenly Father and by the mercy of Lord Jesus through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

Japan, the Philippines and China were also affected by the typhoon.

Baptists and Catholics in Italy signed an agreement on “mixed” or interchurch marriages between members of the two Christian faith traditions. “A common document for a pastoral approach to marriages between Catholics and Baptists in Italy” the addresses Baptists and Catholics who marry each other, in order to help these couples in their preparation for marriage and family life. It also seeks to deepen couples’ awareness of their rights and obligations toward each other, and clarify their relationship with their respective churches.

With this document, said Anna Maffei, president of the Christian Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy (UCEBI), “we offer to our communities and our pastors a practical guide so that the confessional difference that remains between the future spouses may not be experienced as an obstacle but as enrichment.”

Maffei, who signed the agreement on the behalf of Italian Baptists, said that “respective churches should not be competitors anymore but places of listening and encouragement to communion,” highlighting “all that is unifying in spirit and love of God.”

Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, president of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI), who signed for Italian Catholics, declared that...
Egypt

Church Experiences Growth

The Bible Baptist Denomination (BBD) in Egypt has experienced significant numerical growth in recent times.

Formed in 2003 with two churches and 80 members, BBD now has 26 churches with 7,000 members. Based in the ancient city of Alexandria, the second largest city in Egypt, the young Baptist organization received a “presidential license” from the government, granting it legal status in the Muslim-majority North African country.

BBD leader and founder, Botros Faltaos, told Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam that he saw a need for Baptists to develop an identity in Egypt. Non-Coptic and non-Catholic churches in Egypt normally fall under one umbrella group, which includes Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others of the Protestant and Evangelical faith traditions. This umbrella group, among other things, has control of property owned by the various church traditions.

“We hope to expand and grow,” said Faltaos, who made a visit to the BWA Center in Falls Church, Virginia, in the United States on September 9. “We want to evangelize every village in Egypt,” said the former businessman, who sold his nine jewelry stores and construction business, putting the proceeds into an income generation project.

There is an assurance of salvation. He started reading the Bible, and after six years, he became convinced that Baptist beliefs accord with the scriptures.

Faltaos has an assurance of salvation. He started reading the Bible, and after six years, was convinced that Baptist beliefs accord with the scriptures.

The agreement includes aspects of interchurch marriage,” states an accompanying document released by the UCEBI. “In order to clarify the situation, it has become necessary to reach an agreement between the Baptist Union and the Catholic Church.”

There are approximately 6,400 Baptists who hold membership within the 116 churches of the UCEBI. In contrast, more than 87 percent of the population of more than 60 million in Italy identify themselves as Roman Catholic.

The agreement includes aspects of marriage that are held in common between Baptists and Catholics, and also the need for a shared and ongoing pastoral care program by both pastor and priest.

The document offers guidelines to be followed by mixed couples on aspects of Italian civil law, the marriage preparation process, the marriage service or ceremony, and the upbringing of children.

The agreement, which was signed on June 30 in Rome, is the culmination of a process that began in October 2007 with the signing of a “Joint text for the pastoral care in interchurch marriages between Roman Catholics and Baptists in Italy,” by respective commissions of the UCEBI and the CEI. Both commissions met jointly to study interchurch marriages and to draft the agreement.

The agreement was voted into acceptance by the general assemblies of both the UCEBI and the CEI, which paved the way for its signing.
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) took steps to solidify its leadership for the next quinquennium, 2010-2015, when the General Council, meeting in Ede in the Netherlands, nominated John Upton as its president-elect, and reaffirmed Neville Callam as general secretary.

Upton, executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the Virginia Baptist Mission Board in the United States, has had a long association with the BWA, and has served on its two governing bodies, the General Council and the Executive Committee. He is currently chair of the Congress Program Committee, which assists in planning the 20th Baptist World Congress to be held at the Hawai‘i Convention Center in Honolulu from July 28 to August 1, 2010.

In addition, Upton has served on the Baptist World Aid Committee, the Commission on Christian Ethics, and the Executive Committee of the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF), one of six regional fellowships of the BWA.

Twelve persons were also chosen by the General Council as nominees for vice presidents, two selected from each of the six regions of the BWA.

The nominees for vice presidents are Daniel Carro of Argentina and Joel Sierra from Mexico; Harry Gardner of Canada and William Epps from the United States; Olu Menjay of Liberia and Paul Msiza from South Africa; Victor Samuel Gonzalez from Cuba and Burchell Taylor from Jamaica; Regina Claas of Germany and Nabil Costa of Lebanon; and John Kok of Malaysia and Ross Clifford of Australia.

Carro, an Argentinean living in the USA, was nominated to be BWA first vice president.

The election for president will take place during the Baptist World Congress in Hawai‘i next year, while the vice presidents will be presented.

Both the Executive Committee and the General Council accepted the recommendation of the Personnel Committee that Callam be reelected general secretary for 2010-2015. Callam, a Jamaican, was first elected to the position in July 2007 in Accra, Ghana, upon the retirement of Denton Lotz, who held the position for 19 years. The BWA general secretary is normally elected to serve a full quinquennium, the next of which begins in 2010 and ends in 2015.

NEW INITIATIVES

Callam proposed several new initiatives during the meetings in Ede, including the launch of the BWA 400 Legacy Fund, which is aimed at creating a reserve that will provide stability for the financial future of the BWA. Callam stated that the establishment of the fund is an expression of “gratitude to God for the many years during which Baptist Christians have enjoyed the blessings of salvation and the enabling of the Spirit for the work of ministry.”

The fundraising effort, which commenced on August 1, 2009, and continues until July 31, 2015, has the goal of “strengthening the foundations for an economically viable BWA ministry in the future,” Callam stated.

A “thank offering,” given by Baptist individuals, churches, conventions, unions, and institutions, will form the base of the fund. Each person or organization is asked to donate funds “in multiples of 4, 40, 400, or 4,000 units in the currency of their home nation,” Callam announced.

Those who donate to the fund will be specially recognized for their gift. “As a way of recognizing their participation in our future financial help, those who give the thank offering become members of the BWA 400 Legacy Society,” Callam told the General Council.

In addition, those who make the BWA a beneficiary in estate planning – wills, bequests, annuities, properties, charity funds – will also become members of the BWA 400 Legacy Society.

Several other initiatives were also announced by the BWA leader. The Baptist World Emeritus Club, comprising past officers of the BWA and its member bodies, will “play a vital role in the success of the BWA 400 Legacy Fund” by helping to raise awareness about the ministry of the BWA and garnering financial support for the organization. These are persons “who are keen to continue to support the organization
and whose helpfulness over the years is salutary,” Callam explained.

The BWA Ambassadors program, originally conceived in 2003, is being launched. It recognizes “persons who are chosen for their commitment to the BWA mission and message, for their giftedness and willingness to encourage support for the BWA in Baptist churches and organizations, and among individual Baptist believers.” One hundred and fifty ambassadors have already been identified, with the number expected to grow to 400.

Callam also urged the BWA to create two commissions. One commission would deal primarily with Baptist conversations with Muslims. Declaring that the BWA has “encouraged Baptist bodies to consider opening conversations with Muslims in their neighborhoods,” the BWA leader said the commission on Muslim dialogue would “establish a mechanism at the global level with a view to lending coherence to the various dialogues taking place locally and involving Baptists.” Such a commission would “receive contributions from ongoing dialogue taking place around the world,” and “could also provide space for shared reflection and resource sharing that may be deemed appropriate and useful.”

The general secretary also called on the BWA to discuss the subject of a “Christian multi-cultural hermeneutic for intra-Baptist relations.” Claiming that there is a need “to examine the ways in which we understand the various cultures of participants in the BWA,” Callam urged that there be the creation of a “special commission” that would, among other things, “clarify whether, over the years, certain norms have been employed in defining what is acceptable within the BWA” which “have chained the movement in a certain cultural captivity.”

The special commission may “contribute to the reduction of tension among believers from various cultures when we gather in settings to seek consensus on difficult issues of concern to us in the worldwide Baptist movement.”

The commission would, in short, aid in deepening the understanding that Baptists have of each other, regardless of cultural background or heritage.

**REORGANIZATION**

The General Council disbanded the BWA Division of Study & Research and the Division of Evangelism & Education and replaced these with the Division of Mission, Evangelism and Theological Reflection (METR).

The newly-created division will consist of seven commissions – Evangelism, Theological Education & Leadership Formation, Baptist Heritage & Identity, Doctrine & Christian Unity, Christian Ethics, Ministry, and Baptist Worship & Spirituality.

Each commission will comprise approximately 25 “regular members” and not more than 25 “corresponding members,” the former expected to attend at least three of the five meetings in each quinquennium, and the latter attending at least one meeting in the five-year period.

The Division of Freedom and Justice, created by vote of the General Council in July 2008, will be comprised of four commissions – Religious Freedom, Peace, Social & Environmental Justice, and Human Rights Advocacy, and will have a similar structure to the commissions of METR.

Raimundo César Barreto Jr. of Brazil was elected to serve as the first director of the Division of Freedom and Justice and will take up office on March 1, 2010.

In addition to Barreto, other important personnel changes were made. George Bullard, previously elected by the NABF as its general secretary, was named BWA regional secretary for North America. Harrison Olan’g of Tanzania, who serves as Interim General Secretary for the All Africa Baptist Fellowship following on the death of Frank Adams in December 2006, was formally confirmed by the General Council as BWA regional secretary for Africa.

Peter Pinder of the Caribbean, the longest serving regional secretary, having been elected in 1995, gave notice of his retirement from the office. A new regional secretary for the Caribbean is expected to be named sometime in 2010.

Tony Peck for Europe, Bonny Resu for Asia and the Pacific, and Alberto Prokopchuk for Latin America, were affirmed as BWA regional secretaries until 2015.

**CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

The General Council voted to amend the BWA constitution and bylaws.

The Executive Committee will now comprise 25 members, reduced from more than 60 persons, and will have greater oversight responsibilities, including “overseeing the development and implementation of the overall program of the BWA” and “generally overseeing the financial affairs of the BWA.”

Whereas previously three-months notice was required to convene BWA Executive Committee meetings, either the president or general secretary can now call special meetings of the executive with a minimum of five-days notice.

The five approved “clusters of commitment,” adopted by the General Council in 2007, are now included in the BWA bylaws, stating that “the BWA will focus

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on the following areas: worship and fellowship, mission and evangelism, religious liberty and human rights, relief and sustainable community development, and theological reflection."

A new Nominations Committee was formed, and will replace the Officers Search Committee, which proposed the names of the BWA president and vice presidents. The Nominations Committee will also play a vital role in naming persons who serve on BWA committees and commissions. The committee is made up of two nominees from each region and three “at large” members. The BWA president and general secretary are ex-officio members of the Nominations Committee.

NEW MEMBER BODIES

Two conventions and unions have been admitted into membership within the BWA, the Argentine Baptist Association (ABA) and the Uganda Baptist Convention (UBC).

The ABA was formed in August 2005 and comprises 40 churches with approximately 5,000 members.

The UBC was organized in May 2000 and has a membership of more than 21,000 in 366 churches. The UBC engages in mission work in Southern Sudan among Sudanese refugees who returned home after living in exile in Northern Uganda. The UBC has member churches in Yei, Nimule, Juba, Kejikeji, Tombura, Kapeota, and Torit in Southern Sudan.

By Eron Henry

The Union of Baptist Churches in the Netherlands is, in international terms, a small union, with only 84 churches and 11,500 members.

Yet, this country’s capital is the cradle of Baptist life. It was in Amsterdam in 1609 that John Smyth and Thomas Helwys gathered a group of roughly 40 English dissenters who had fled their home country in order to enjoy the liberty of worship according to conscience. Yet, the Baptist church did not take root in the Netherlands until more than two centuries later. Some of the British exiles, including Helwys, returned to England, forming the first Baptist church there, while others, such as Smyth, a former Church of England priest, remained in Holland and joined the Mennonite church.

But as the Netherlands is the fountainhead of early Baptist beginnings, it was to that country that the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) returned in July 2009 to revisit its roots as the international organization continued its celebration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Baptist movement.

The 400-year anniversary was a major theme in the program throughout the week of July 27 to August 1, in worship, study, discussions, and fellowship.

Worship

Morning worship throughout the week focused on the work of outstanding Baptists throughout the past 400 years, with readings from their writings, sermons, letters or interviews, including Baptist pioneers Helwys and Smyth;
missionary leaders such as George Liele, William Carey, Ann Judson, Johann Oncken, and Lottie Moon; outstanding preachers such as Charles Spurgeon, George Truett, Rubens Lopes, and William Tolbert; and Baptist prophets Martin Luther King, Jr., Samuel Sharpe, and William Knibb.

A special quadricentennial service was held on Thursday, July 30, at the Singelkerk, a Mennonite church built in 1608 on Amsterdam’s Singel Canal, a year before the first Baptists met in a bakery on the Amstel River, a short distance further west. The worship service featured a Litany of Thanksgiving led by young Baptist leaders drawn from the BWA Emerging Leaders Network. Denton Lotz, former general secretary of the BWA, was the keynote speaker at this service.

Lotz stated that the quest for religious freedom is a distinctive Baptist tradition, but the threats to religious freedom in the 21st century are different from those 400 years ago. In the 21st century, “most civilized and democratic governments recognize religious freedom as an inherent right,” and the “United Nations Declaration on Human Rights of 1948 affirms religious freedom and the right to conversion,” Lotz explained. According to Lotz, who served as BWA general secretary for 19 years until his retirement in 2007, “The real enemy of religious freedom is the religion of secularism which wants . . . to [confine] religion to its buildings and to prohibit a public expression of faith.”

Forums

Several forums were held during the week that focused primarily on the 400th celebration. One forum included the participation of several leading Baptist scholars in historical theology and church history who led discussions on the history of Baptist witness in different regions of the world.

Timothy George, a specialist in historical theology and dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Alabama in the United States, spoke on the history of the Baptist movement in North America; Horace Russell, former president of the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica and retired professor of historical theology at Palmer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania in the United States, reflected on Baptist history in the Caribbean; and Dinorah Méndez, Mexican church historian, assessed the progress of Baptist work in Latin America.

Also leading discussions were Peter Morden of Spurgeon’s College in London, England, who assessed the development of Baptist witness in Europe; Solomon Ishola, General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, who examined the growth and development of Baptist work in Africa; and Ken Manley, former principal at Whitley College of the University of Melbourne in Australia, who appraised the history of Baptist life in Asia and the Pacific.

Another forum saw a presentation by William Brackney, Director of the Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, a cooperative project between the Acadia Divinity College and the Acadia University Library in Nova Scotia, Canada, who gave an analysis of the Baptist contribution to social transformation.

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The number of member bodies within the BWA is now 216.

AWARDS

Leena Lavanya Kumari of Narasaraopet, Andhra Pradesh, India, was presented with the 2009 Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award. The award was recognition of Lavanya’s philanthropic work, human rights advocacy, and church planting endeavors in Narasaraopet and surrounding towns and villages.

BWA President David Coffey received the “Baptist of the Year Award” for 2008 from the Baptist Center for Ethics, based in Nashville, Tennessee, in the United States. Robert Parham, founder and executive director, was given permission to present the award to Coffey during the Gathering.

These far-reaching decisions and actions by the BWA Executive Committee and General Council complemented the convivial atmosphere, fellowship and sharing that formed part of the BWA Annual Gathering in the Dutch town of Ede, about an hour outside of Amsterdam.

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One forum focused on efforts at peacemaking in which Baptists have played a significant part. This forum was led by Karen Bullock, Director of the PhD program at B.H. Carroll Theological Institute in Texas in the United States and chair of the BWA Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity.

**Commissions and Workgroups**

BWA commissions and workgroups, which are the contexts within which Baptist leaders, theologians, professors, scholars and writers from around the world deliberate on theological, doctrinal, ethical, historical and social issues of concern to Baptists, also gave space to discussions on the 400th anniversary.

The Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity received a paper on the history of Baptists in the Netherlands by Teun van der Leer, Rector of the Baptist Seminary of the Netherlands, while commission members benefited from a presentation related to the Amsterdam archives by Dutch Baptist historian, Kirsten Timmer.

In the Academic and Theological Education Workgroup, presenters led conversations about how certain theological convictions that mark Baptist life over the past 400 years are reflected in different regions of the world. Discussions were based on a paper presented by Ian Randall, Director of Research at Spurgeon’s College in England, at the 7th Baptist International Conference on Theological Education that was held in Prague in the Czech Republic in July 2008.

The Church Health and Effectiveness Workgroup focused on “The Church in Europe after Christendom” and “The Future of the Church in the Eyes of Emerging Leaders.”

Bill Tillman, T.B. Maston Professor of Christian Ethics at Logsdon School of Theology in Texas, USA, presented an evaluation of “The Contribution of Baptists to Christian Ethics” at meetings of the Commission on Christian Ethics, while the Commission on Freedom and Justice discussed “Defending Religious Freedom: A Baptist Principle.”

The Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation focused on a range of issues, including a discussion on “Baptists and Themes of Liberation” and “Baptist Approaches to the Interpretation of Scripture.”

A congratulatory letter to the BWA from evangelist Billy Graham was read by Lotz at the special quadricentennial service. Graham, who has had a long association with the BWA, having spoken at every Baptist World Congress between 1950 and 1985, said, “How I wish I could be with you as I have so often attended BWA meetings over the years. I am now 90 years of age, and my health and strength will not allow me to travel. Yet, I am with you in spirit and encouragement as you meet.”

Graham’s letter warmed the hearts of the nearly 400 delegates from more than 50 countries who had gathered in the Netherlands for the BWA meetings. Baptists left the Netherlands challenged and refreshed, inspired by 400 years of significant contribution in many of the 119 countries that are represented within the BWA.
Presenting papers as part of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Annual Gathering in the Netherlands, Caribbean-American scholar Delroy Reid-Salmon and Mexican-American Baptist academic Nora Lozano interpreted the theme of liberation in presentations to the BWA Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation.

Reid-Salmon assessed the theological insights he has gleaned from writing a book about Sam Sharpe, the main leader of the 1831-32 “Baptist War” slave rebellion in Jamaica. Sharpe, a Baptist deacon, and hundreds of others were arrested and summarily executed for organizing a general strike at sugar-cane-harvesting time that turned into an attempted rebellion against their owners. Sharpe was posthumously conferred with the Order of National Hero by the Jamaican government in the 1970s, the country’s highest honor.

Some accounts say that Baptist missionaries and pastors helped Sharpe stir the upheaval, which came after a series of prayer meetings and Bible studies in which the future rebels studied the liberation themes found in Scripture.

Reid-Salmon, a pastor in New York and a fellow at Regent’s Park College at Oxford University in England, said the work of God in history is evident in Sharpe’s story. “It is indisputable that this rebellion has played a major role in the abolition of slavery,” he said. Abolition came to Jamaica and the rest of the British Empire a few years after Sharpe’s rebellion and, nearly 30 years later, in the United States.

The slaves’ decision to strike and, eventually, to revolt, was consistent with the Bible’s passages on freedom, justice and oppression, Reid-Salmon said. “The biblical witness consists of the Exodus story, the prophetic tradition and of course the gospel of Jesus Christ,” he said.

During the gathering’s morning worship service in which participants remembered Baptist prophets, Reid-Salmon read part of Sharpe’s defense of his actions.

“They may put some of us to death, but they cannot hang and shoot us all,” he quoted Sharpe as saying. “In reading my Bible, I found that the white man had no more right to make a slave of me than I have to make a slave of the white man. I would rather go out and die on that gallows than to live as a slave.”

After Sharpe was arrested, powerful white religious leaders told him he was wrong not to be content with the station in life in which God had placed him.

But accepting such oppression would not have been in line with God’s nature, Reid-Salmon said. “In the final analysis, Christians either behave as if they believe humanity is made in the image of God, or else they practice a theology that essentially asserts God is a creation of human freedom,” he said. “Human beings take responsibility for re-ordering society in response to God’s freedom.”

Lozano, meanwhile, found potential liberation for women – both Protestant and Catholic – in Latin America and elsewhere by taking another look at the biblical story of Mary, Jesus’ mother.

She noted the Mexican story of the Virgin of Guadalupe – a purported apparition of Mary to an indigenous peasant in Mexico City in the 16th Century – and how closely it ties the identity of the nation’s Catholicism with Mary, who serves as a sort of “demi-goddess.”

Mexican Baptists and other Protestants, however, actively ignore Mary, to the extent of giving the biblical character short shrift.

There are analogous Virgin Mary cults of devotion in other Latin American countries.

“It seems that there is a consensus among these Baptists to disregard, neglect or reject the Virgin Mary,” Lozano said, speaking of an informal survey she had done of some of her global Baptist colleagues, asking them how Baptists in their country dealt with Mary. Lozano is a professor at the Baptist University of the Americas in San Antonio, Texas, in the United States.

(Continued on next page)
In countries where Catholics are a majority, she added, “Baptists tend to move back and forth between actively rejecting and simply ignoring Mary.”

But, Lozano noted, “This becomes one of the major barriers to relations between Catholics and Baptists” in those countries.

Because Mary is so perfect in popular Catholic theology in Latin America – perpetually a virgin, although a mother; blameless, even sinless – she becomes an impossible standard of womanhood. Nonetheless, many men look for this standard in the mother of their children.

On the other hand, Lozano noted, Mary’s opposite – the wanton harlot – is what many men tend to look for in sex partners. Being forced to choose between the two stereotypes can be deadly for women.

“When these [images of Mary and her opposite] are misused, they become oppressive and a source of suffering for women,” she said. “Neither one of these models is a good one for women, because they do not present women as complete human beings.”

But embracing what Lozano called the “life-giving” aspects of Marian veneration can be both healthy for all women and a bridge between Latin American Protestants and Catholics, she contended.

The audience that gathered on the evening of Friday, July 31, in the auditorium of the De Reehorst Hotel and Congrescentrum in Ede, Netherlands, listened with intensity and compassion to take in every syllable spoken by the three Baptist peacemakers. These modern peacemakers told their compelling stories during a forum at the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Annual Gathering which coincided with the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of the first Baptist church in Amsterdam by English exiles fleeing religious persecution in their country.

The presenters were Raquel Contreras, a BWA vice president, former president of the Union of Baptists in Latin America and current president of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile; Brickson Sam, youth director of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship; and Malkhaz Songulashvili, president of the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia. Coming from very different parts of the world, these practitioners of Jesus Christ’s call to his disciples to be peacemakers related moving stories about peacemaking initiatives in South America, Africa and Georgia, respectively.

“We are supposed to be people of peace and reconciliation, but sometimes we live with a vital contradiction to our core beliefs.” Contreras was making reference to a major conflict that began in January of 1932 during the national assembly of the convention in the south of Chile. The conflict arose over the way money should be handled. The discussion became so heated that five pastors left the convention, and the large church where the meeting was held was closed for several years. Contreras commented that this story “is shamefully real and unfortunately repeats itself in different countries, languages and cultures.” For 70 years the two groups continued in their respective ministry separately.

In time, overtures like exchange of pastors and students attending each other’s seminaries took place, but the groups were ostensibly separated until the presidents of the two conventions came together to begin conversations to end the historical separation. “After all,” she said, “we have the same difficulties and dreams and common roots.” These conversations ultimately led to the two groups asking for forgiveness for “what our parents had done, even though they believed they were doing the right thing.” The two conventions have not become one, but there are encouraging signs of bridging the gap.
The work of peacemaking in the Republic of Georgia reveals another prism of light in a country long beset by war and political conflicts. The impact is best expressed by Malkhaz Songulashvili. “Words like helplessness and humiliation,” he said, “do not come close enough to describe the pain of living with fear; yet, all over the Bible, including the event of Jesus’ resurrection, we read where God says to us that we do not need to be afraid.” In tracing his growth to owning his own fear, he told himself, “I can’t be a bishop if I am afraid.” The older generations of people in the Republic of Georgia had lived through the World Wars and had just about given up hope. In addition, the churches in the former Soviet Union had sided with Russia during World War II and had lost their vision for helping the poor.

In modern times, the people of Georgia live with two perplexing matters. One is the ongoing tensions and military conflicts between Russia and some of its former republics, now independent nations. The other is the Chetneyan rebels living in the hills. These rebels often cross over the border into Georgia looking for food and shelter. In the process, they would commit acts of horrible violence, including murder, kidnapping and abuse of Georgian women.

How can the church become an agent of God’s peace and reconciliation and address the brooding fear? The answer came in the form of another question. “Why not let us cancel [our own] Christmas [celebrations] and give the money to the Chetneyan refugees?”

Answering this question seemed to open the door to a new and Spirit-driven understanding for the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia to confront its fear and to display the presence of Christ in peace and reconciliation. What followed was a series of exciting ministry initiatives to the refugees. Led by Songulashvili, the members of the church began a fundraising program to support this new ministry.

These new peacemakers also began visiting the refugee camps and saw that the children were in dire need of medical attention and school supplies. They started talking with the refugees and shared stories in an attempt to build friendships. They began eating together and praying together and having times of fun and fellowship with the refugees. “It is possible to build bridges to people, any people,” said Songulashvili, “for in doing so we are bringing the presence and peace of Christ.”
On July 28 during the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering, approximately 160 persons gathered in the Schouwburg Auditorium to hear a presentation on “Baptists and Transformation” by William Brackney, the Millard R. Cherry Distinguished Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at the Acadia Divinity College and Acadia University of Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada. The presentation included illustrative reflections of the transformation Baptists have had theologically, socially and politically, and concluded with a citation of the factors that lead Baptists to be transformational and the challenges ahead for Baptists as transformers.

Theological Transformation

Brackney reminded the audience that “the central doctrine of Baptist theological identity is ecclesiology, or the doctrine of the church.” The Puritan and Separatist movements of the 1590s and early 1600s began to question the English ecclesiastical paradigm, uniting around personal and confessions of faith and covenants by the congregations themselves. John Smyth and Thomas Helwys were cited for their seminal contributions asserting liberty in matters of personal/congregational theology. “Baptist congregations came to value one’s personal narrative or testimony of redemption in one’s life as well as the work of God in transforming one’s life,” said Brackney.

Arguably the most impressive piece of Baptist theological transformation came in the work of Walter Rauschenbusch, which is chronicled in his book, A Theology of Social Gospel. His influence on the civil rights movement in the United States and South Africa, in the crusade for a national health care program in Canada and in the anti-poverty programs later adopted by evangelicals and ecumenists alike attest to the transformational character Baptists have had on theology. “Transformed personally,” said Brackney, “Walter tackled problems of greed in the accumulation of industrial capital. He strove for the imposition of working standards for women and children, and the recognition and rights of women. He introduced a new doctrine of humanity, a new understanding of sinfulness that amounted to structural evil in institutions, and a broader definition of salvation that included the social context.”

Social Transformation

Baptist history is replete with instances of changes in attitudes, practices, status, recognition, roles and empowerment of minorities and women not to mention the “architectural achievements of Baptists are a visual statement of unique form of inverse social transformation,” said Brackney.

Brackney took the listeners on an excursion through time when, from humble beginnings as refugees in Holland, Baptists returned to England and founded churches not only in London, but also in Bristol, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Nottingham.

American Baptists have also proven to be social transformers, even from the early days in Jamestown, when they were considered as outcasts. Brackney explained:

As Baptists entered the stage of American history, they were largely landless, beset by currency inflation, shut out of community oligarchies, and political offices, most of whom were at the bottom of the social ladder, bondservants, Indians, Negroes, women and young persons. The establishment of the College of Rhode Island (later Brown University) in the mid-eighteenth century by Philadelphia region Baptists brought instant national attention to the respectability of the emerging denomination as they joined the leading colonial religious establishments in providing higher education in pre-revolutionary America.

Baptists became shopkeepers and landholders and built sturdy meetinghouses and maintained church cemeteries in the Pennsylvania Colony. In the eighteenth century in the Carolinas, Baptists became plantation owners, managers, lawyers, clergy and shopkeepers. They were among leading citizens who began and endowed schools and colleges.

No other group accents the social transformation of Baptists better than the black Baptist population. Arriving in the colonies as slaves in 1619, they learned to read, memorize scripture, worship, care for each other, and maintain family structure and personal dignity. Black congregations became centers of education and development.
Baptists as social transformers holds for other countries as well. Baptists figured significantly in transforming India through the work of a missionary named John E. Clough and his wife. Furthermore, an Australian woman, Ellen Arnold, appointed by the Australian Baptist Missionary Society, established congregations, opened medical clinics, and established schools in what is now Bangladesh.

Perhaps the most notable example of social transformation is the contribution of Baptists in the abolition of slavery. British Baptists were leaders in encouraging the end to the slave trade. As hostility grew in the Baptist community of America, Baptists of Northern states took the position in the mission societies that no slaveholder should be appointed a Baptist missionary, which led to the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.

Baptist educational history is replete with institutional contributions to social transformation. Brown University in Rhode Island was cited as the mother school of the elective system of courses, which allowed for a greater degree of specialization, the brainchild of the school’s fifth president, Francis Wayland. Missionary Baptists established schools to train American Indians, the premier of which was Indian University in Oklahoma, later Bacone College. In multilingual Montreal, Quebec, the finest religious library in the British provinces was supported by generous English Baptists in the first half of the 19th century, and in the same era, the Baptists of the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia, excluded from the provincial university of Halifax, commenced their own academy to become fully-chartered Acadia University in 1838 and one of the first schools in Canada to admit female students.

Political Transformation

Baptists have made significant contributions in transforming political cultures. What began in 17th century England has continued around the world. Baptists stood against the prevailing cultures and institutions where such institutions attempted to interfere in spiritual matters, yet maintained a healthy allegiance to social order and human progress. “Two political doctrines emerged from this context: religious liberty and its corollary, the separation of church and state,” said Brackney. Closely related to the principle of individual soul freedom is the autonomy of the local congregation. John Locke demonstrated his indebtedness to Baptists in describing churches as voluntary associations, as voluntarism was at the seedbed of a new understanding of religion in mid-century England.

The separation of church and state emerged powerfully in the North American experience. The 19th century witnessed the internationalization of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Baptists in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America influenced new institutions and brought about democratic reforms.

There is a list of individuals whose names are synonymous with Baptist political transformation such as Lott Carey, William Carey, and the Judsons. The formation of the Baptist World Alliance in 1905 has as one of its stated objectives, the pursuit of religious liberty. Three Baptist groups (the Southern Baptist Convention, the Northern Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention) united to support the American Baptist Bill of Rights which asserts religious liberty as an inalienable right which is indispensable to human welfare. Religious liberty is the first and most basic human right and the implication is that Baptists are among the leading Christian voices in the area of human rights.

However, the irony is that Baptists have themselves been resistant at times to the prevailing political culture, which they have helped to create; and, at other times, have resisted the democratizing forces they themselves were at the forefront of producing.

Factors in Baptist Character that Lead to Transformation

The Bible is an important resource in the transformation of the Christian community. Scripture clearly teaches direct accountability to God. The Bible, for Baptists, represents a constantly transforming text. The scriptures are replete with instances where persons are called to new life in Christ, transformed patterns and attitudes, and bold sacrifices. Baptists are by their nature activists: it is part of our sense of vocation. The priority of religious experience explains why Baptists at their best are transformers.

The Challenges Ahead for a Transformational People

When one considers the oppressive political regimes that characterize Central Asia where non-Christian religious leaders deny Christians the right to worship, as well as similar circumstances in Myanmar, Thailand, North Korea, China, and some parts of Africa, it is clear that the challenges ahead are looming.

Christian transformation also lies in the response we can make through the BWA and the Global Christian Forum to the trafficking of human beings. “The United Nations estimates there are 12.3 million persons held in forced labor, bonded labor, forced child labor, and sexual servitude.” In 2008, “800,000 persons were trafficked across national borders against their wills, 80 percent of whom were women,” Brackney said. “We are called to be God’s free people to transform the world,” he concluded. “It is part of who we are. Let us be faithful.”

William Epps is senior pastor of Second Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California, in the United States, and is a member of the Baptist World Alliance General Council, Executive Committee, Communications Executive Committee, and the Congress Program Committee.
As global Baptists celebrated 400 years of history during the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Annual Gathering, two special sessions highlighted significant markers of Baptist life in the BWA’s six regions.

Peter Morden of Spurgeon’s College in London, focused on Thomas Helwys, Anne Steele, and Johann Oncken, who he said illustrated key themes in European Baptist history. Helwys and John Smyth founded the first Baptist church in 1609, in the city of Amsterdam. In 1612, Helwys and a few followers returned to England and organized the first Baptist church on English soil, at Spitalfields. That same year he published *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, which challenged the king’s right to interfere with an individual’s religion. Helwys was arrested and thrown into prison, where he died a few years later.

Helwys’ call for religious liberty was “no postmodern mushy of toleration” in which anything goes, Morden said. Rather, he emphasized the uniqueness of Christ, the priority of evangelism and the advantages of Baptist distinctives while arguing that no matter what one’s beliefs, it is not the role of the king or state to compel people regarding their religious conscience.

Steele, an 18th century poet and hymn-writer, knew a life shaped by intense suffering, but expressed profound faith despite her pain, and, as a result, her hymns gained wide popularity in the early 19th century. Steele’s hymns express an utter dependence on God that was deeply experiential, reflecting the experiential nature of Baptist faith.

Morden also mentioned Oncken, a German Baptist who was baptized in 1834 and helped organize the first German Baptist church, in Hamburg, the following day. Serving as pastor, Oncken integrated evangelism and social action, offering his church’s facilities for public use and building bridges that led to a sharp decline in persecution and greater appreciation for Baptists, Morden said.

Helwys, Steele, and Oncken exhibited “key Baptist principles to which European Baptists have sought to aspire,” Morden said, principles of radical commitment to Christ, patient endurance under persecution, a commitment to religious freedom, trust in the scriptures as God’s word, and a passion for holistic mission.

**Caribbean**

Horace Russell, from Jamaica, said Baptists in the Caribbean must be understood in the contexts of slavery and migration. George Liele, a freed slave from America, came to Jamaica in 1783, and other freed slaves went as missionaries to the Bahamas.

The early missionaries came out of the experience of an evangelical revival that targeted people of African descent, Russell said, but did not leave them free to practice their faith as they wished. In 1834, slavery was abolished in Jamaica, making all slaves apprentices, though still not fully free.

Baptists in Jamaica invited the Baptist Missionary Society in Britain to strengthen the Baptist mission on the island, and a theological college was formed in 1843 to aid the Baptist cause in the Caribbean in the development of an educated clergy.

A significant contribution of Caribbean Baptists has been the recognition that ministry has to do “with development of the human person as a whole,” Russell said, with the church being “a place where people could develop.”

The Caribbean emphasis on mission and the important role of women’s work continue a holistic ministry of health and salvation as two sides of the same coin, he said.

**Asia**

Ken Manley spoke to the development of Baptists in Asia and the Pacific, the largest of the BWA’s six regions, and home to more than half of the world’s people. Most Baptists in Asia and the Pacific trace their roots to the witness of Baptists from Britain or North America, he said, beginning in 1793 with William Carey’s arrival in India.

Manley surveyed the beginnings and extent of Baptist work in countries across Asia and the Pacific, noting at several points how mission work in places like Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Indonesia began in earnest after missionaries were forced out of China in 1949 and sought new fields of ministry.

Manley also pointed to indigenous leaders and spontaneous revivals that contributed to the growth and vitality of Baptist work in Asia and the Pacific. Baptists there, who serve “in some of the poorest and most heavily populated nations on earth, with their amazing tapestry of religious beliefs and political systems, are an integral part of the global Baptist story,” he said.

**Africa**

Solomon Ishola, general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, spoke on the growth of Baptists in Africa. Despite their many differences, Africans share many
of the same socio-economic realities, he said. In addition, “Africans are generally and incurably religious,” Ishola said, a trait that permeates every facet of life, and has “provided fertile soil for the Gospel to take root.”

Baptist work in Africa did not begin as intentional mission work, he said, but as freed slaves from British colonies and the United States returned to colonize Sierra Leone (1792) and Liberia (1822). The Baptist presence had little contact with indigenous peoples, however, who they considered inferior, Ishola said.

The migration of German and English settlers brought the Baptist witness to South Africa in the early 1800s, but the exploitation of blacks by the white settlers and the resulting system of apartheid led to sharp divisions among white and black Baptists that are just beginning to be healed, Ishola said.

The first missionary to Nigeria was Thomas Bowen, sent by the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States in 1850. It was a painful irony, Ishola observed, that a convention begun because of its support for slavery “set the pace in sending missionaries to the relatives of the slaves they were still keeping.”

When most of the American missionaries returned home during the American Civil War, Ishola said, national Baptists assumed greater leadership, which led to discord when the missionaries returned.

Ishola noted a more recent round of conflict when Southern Baptist missionaries withdrew from their traditional fields of work as the International Mission Board began its “New Directions” strategy. The loss of funding and resources for cherished ministries was painful, Ishola said, but the experience ultimately helped African Baptists grow and take more responsibility for their own future.

A lesson to be learned, Ishola emphasized, is that cooperative partnership that leads to self-sufficiency is a more effective mission strategy than paternalism that leads to dependency.

Latin America

Dinorah Méndez, of Mexican Baptist Seminary, spoke about Baptist growth and issues of concern in Latin America, where Protestant mission work began with the arrival of Scotsman Diego Thompson in 1818. Beginning in Argentina, Thompson distributed Bibles throughout Latin America as an agent of the British Bible Society.

Méndez reviewed the beginnings of Baptist mission work in Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina, emphasizing how early Latin American Baptists had to struggle for religious liberty because of the entrenched nature of Catholicism in the area.

Following the Spanish conquests of the 16th century, Catholicism became deeply ingrained not only in the culture, but in the government of Latin American countries. The lack of separation between church and state led to intolerance and physical persecution of minority groups such as Baptists, Méndez said.

While some Baptists have hopes of better relations with the Catholic Church, Méndez said efforts at rapprochement are generally led by those who have not experienced Catholicism in the Latin American context, where such relations are viewed with greater distrust.

Conflict with Catholics cannot just be swept away, Méndez said: “We must keep alive an awareness of the particularities of context, and how the struggle for religious liberty continues where the Catholic Church continues to dominate.”

In response to restrictive governments and Catholic domination, Baptists’ belief in free will and congregational government has fostered opportunities for freedom not experienced elsewhere, Méndez said, “an alternative model from which many democratic ideals were nurtured.”

Méndez said Neo-Pentecostalism and post-denominationalism are present threats to the Baptist churches in Latin America. In many churches, she said, Pentecostals have gained enough influence to lead congregations away from their Baptist identity and from Baptist distinctives such as the separation of church and state.

Poverty, inequality, and religious confusion add to the challenges, Méndez said. Even so, Latin American Baptists continue to grow and are becoming increasingly involved in sending out missionaries of their own.

Baptists’ 400th anniversary offers Latin American Baptists “an opportunity to recognize our history, to locate ourselves in it, and to appreciate it as valuable,” she said.

North America

Timothy George, dean of the Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, in the United States, traced four major themes in Baptist life through the four centuries Baptists have been present in North America.

The 17th century was marked by a struggle for liberty, George said. Though Puritans had been persecuted in England, when they came to power in New England, they set up an “ecclesiocracy” and persecuted others, whipping and even hanging those who proclaimed a gospel contrary to their own beliefs.

Roger Williams and other early Baptists were key voices in support of religious liberty, but the price of religious freedom is eternal vigilance, George said. Massachusetts retained an established church until 1833, and persecution continued in Virginia through the Revolutionary period.

Revival was a primary theme in the 18th century, George said. The Philadelphia Baptist Association spread its influence through many of the colonies, but the fires of revivalism were more of an indigenous movement sparked by

(Continued on next page)
Hundreds of European Baptists travelled to Amsterdam in late July to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Baptist movement. The first Baptist church was founded in the Dutch capital in 1609 by English exiles who fled religious persecution in their country.

“Amsterdam 400”, held July 24-26 and planned by the European Baptist Federation (EBF), was the forum through which European Baptists and Baptist leaders from elsewhere gathered to celebrate 400 years of Baptist witness.

Early Baptist beginnings had a peculiar history on the European continent. Even though the first Baptist church began in the Dutch republic at the start of the 17th century, it was more than two centuries later before Baptist roots were planted in the Netherlands as several of the founders returned to Britain or switched affiliation to the Mennonite church. And other than Britain, the rest of Europe did not have a strong Baptist presence until the 1800s when Johann Gerhard Oncken, referred to as the “Father of German Baptists” and the “Apostle of European Baptists,” directed and guided the growth of Baptists throughout Germany and across much of continental Europe for half a century.

Interestingly, the 400th anniversary of the Baptist faith also coincides with the 125th anniversary of the death of Oncken, who died in 1884 after helping to found 280 Baptist churches, more than 170 of these in Scandinavia and the Slavic states.

But the work of Oncken and those who followed him has resulted in a significant, and in some instances, a growing Baptist presence on the continent. Ukraine has roughly 3,000 churches and church plants and approximately 150,000 members through two BWA-affiliated conventions and unions; Romania has nearly 2,000 churches and more than 100,000 members through the two BWA member bodies in that country; and Russia has almost 100,000 members and more than 1,500 churches in its two BWA member bodies.

There are now more than 50 Baptist conventions and unions that are part of the EBF, representing more than 800,000 members in approximately 13,000 churches. The EBF, which includes churches in Europe and the Middle East, also has a presence in Eurasian countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The roughly 800 attendees at the Amsterdam 400 events explored key areas of Baptist scholarship, doctrine, and

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**Baptist “Major Moments” continued**

George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, and others. “New Light Baptists” were among those to emerge from the movement. Led by Shubal Stearns and Daniel Marshall, their influence moved south into North Carolina and beyond.

Baptist piety of the time was a corporeal experience, George said. Common Baptist rites such as baptism by immersion, receiving communion, the laying on of hands, the right hand of fellowship, and foot washing were all “bodily expressions of faith.”

George said the 19th century was marked by the theme of mission. Many missionary efforts were begun, along with supportive organizations such as Women’s Mite Societies and the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

As mission societies multiplied, so did challenges, George said. Landmarkism promoted a truncated and isolated form of “Baptistness,” while anti-mission movements “were a recrudescence of hyper-Calvinism.” The issue of slavery led to division between northern and southern Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians. Yet, George said, “in that cauldron of oppression was born the seeds of revival among African Americans.”

The 20th century was marked by the theme of witness, George said, with influential voices ranging from Walter Rauschenbusch’s and Helen Barrett Montgomery’s call for social responsibility to Annie Armstrong’s and Lottie Moon’s fervent appeals for mission support, to the preaching of George Truett, Carlisle Marney, Billy Graham, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many others.

Despite those clear voices, George said, “The witness is not unsullied.” Tensions remain between sectarianism and ecumenism, and some Baptists still tend “to the vociferous end” of being schismatic and sectarian.

As North American Baptists face the 21st century, they face the threat of a post-denominational world “where labels
practice, including Baptist history, religious liberty, mission, theological education, and worship. Significant leaders from Europe and the worldwide Baptist movement shared in the three-day event, including BWA General Secretary Neville Callam and President David Coffey, who spoke at the opening and closing sessions, respectively.

Callam told European Baptists that “perhaps, the greatest challenge Christians in Europe face is the evangelization of their continent,” a task in which Baptists have an important part to play. He urged Europeans to adopt “the vocation to evangelize those who do not have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.”

Coffey, himself a European, said that if Europeans are to be effective disciples, then “there are privileges we have to relinquish,” stating that, as “Jesus relinquished his hold on privileges,” so should his followers be prepared to “relinquish privilege for the sake of service.”

“The hands that filled the oceans with water became the serving hands in the Upper Room. The hands that flung stars into space became the working hands in the carpenter’s shop,” Coffey declared.

The EBF used the occasion also to mark its 60th anniversary, having been formed in 1949. It also held its annual council meeting. Among the important decisions coming out of the meeting was the election of Valeriu Ghiletchi, bishop of the Union of Christian Evangelical Baptists of Moldova, as EBF president. Ghiletchi, who is an elected member of Moldova’s parliament, succeeds Toma Magda of Croatia who became EBF president in 2007.

Ghiletchi was reelected to Moldova’s parliament on July 29, having previously been elected in 1998. Disputed elections held in April led to widespread demonstrations throughout the country amidst charges of fraud by the communist party which previously held power. The country’s parliament was dissolved on June 15 and fresh elections held.

The new president for Baptists in Europe said that “despite the claims by past communist leaders, we are not seeing the end of Christianity.” He said that the message coming out of Amsterdam 400 is to “know the limits of an earthly ruler.” In reference to Baptist beginnings, he asked, “Who would have believed that the message preached by Smyth and Helwys would have gone so far?”

It is Ghiletchi’s hope that Baptists in Europe will “be a Christo-centric Baptist family” with “a new enthusiasm that can only come through experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit.”

European Baptists, like Baptists everywhere, are especially committed to the cause of religious liberty, and have made recent human rights visits to Azerbaijan and to Palestine. Human trafficking is also an issue that the EBF is especially concerned about, and it has established a workgroup and put out several publications on the matter. Church planting, through the Indigenous Mission Project, has also extended work into unreached areas and into places where Baptist witness is weak, particularly in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East.

European Baptists were inspired to renew faith and commitment for the coming leg of the journey, the next 400 years.
A spectacular celebration of 400 years of Baptist life was held in Kiev, Ukraine, on Sunday, August 30. Nearly 4,000 Ukrainian Baptists were joined by 250 delegates from more than 20 Slavic Baptist unions.

A three-hour program reviewed the history of Baptists in general and Slavic Baptists in particular and was punctuated with testimonies, drama, video and superb music by a combined choir and orchestra.

Greetings from the world Baptist family were brought by Tony Peck, Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Regional Secretary for Europe, and European Baptist Federation (EBF) General Secretary. Representatives of other Christian traditions in Ukraine were also present.

The well-known evangelist Victor Gamm gave the challenge for the future, and the handing on of the Baptist tradition was symbolized by the passing of a Bible and a communion cup from older to younger leaders. The director of the event was Pavel Urguryan, lawyer, member of the Ukrainian Parliament, and a key younger Baptist leader in the region.

The celebration was preceded by a three-day conference, from August 27-29, for the delegates from the Slavic unions in Europe, Central Asia, the USA and Australia. Different aspects of Baptist identity were explored, with particular reference to how they had developed in the Slavic context. A speech was given on the current religious freedom situation in Ukraine by the First Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, Alexander Turchinov, who is a member of one of the Kiev Baptist churches where he preaches regularly.

In a speech given at the conference, Peck spoke about the roots of the Baptist concern for freedom of conscience in Scripture and early Baptist writings. Peck applied this to several areas of Baptist life today including evangelism, which should be carried out in a way that respects the individual conscience, and religious freedom and human rights, to which Baptists should commit themselves, even for the freedom of those with whom they disagree.

Peck also highlighted the relationship of church and state, which had been a critical issue during the days of Soviet communism, when obedience to the government as advocated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 13 had to be balanced by Peter’s words founded in Acts 5, “We must obey God rather than men.” Finally, Peck asserted that Baptists need to allow and encourage freedom of conscience among themselves, and not separate from one another on matters that are not central to the Gospel and to Baptist identity.

In celebrating this historic Baptist concern for freedom of conscience and religious liberty, the conference was very concerned to hear about those places in the region where these freedoms were denied. In particular, prayer was offered for the leaders of the Baptist union in Uzbekistan, where there is a deteriorating situation regarding religious freedom.

It is not often practically possible for these Slavic unions to meet together, so the events in Kiev were a great means of encouragement, especially to some of the smaller Baptist unions. It was also a worthy continuation of the BWA and EBF celebrations of 400 years of Baptist life in Amsterdam and Ede, Netherlands, held a few weeks earlier.

Slava Bogu! (Praise God!)

Tony Peck is BWA regional secretary for Europe and general secretary for the European Baptist Federation.
The Union of Baptist Churches in the Netherlands, ministering in the country where the Baptist faith was founded, is launching a series of new initiatives to strengthen relationships between its churches, as well as with other denominations and the worldwide body of Baptists.

Although the Baptist church was first established in Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, in 1609, the Baptist faith did not take root in the country until the mid-1800s. Some of the British exiles who founded the first church returned to Britain, while others who remained in the Netherlands became part of the Mennonite church.

The Baptist faith returned to the Netherlands in 1845 with the missionary work of Julius Kobner, an assistant of Johann Oncken. In 1881, the Baptist union in the Netherlands was founded with seven churches.

Today, according to General Secretary Albrecht Boerrigter, the 128-year-old union has 84 churches and 11,500 members. The Baptist church is a small church in Holland, with the largest denomination being the Roman Catholic Church and the second largest being the Dutch Reformed Church, the former “privileged” church in the country.

However, the union has a big vision. At its recent annual meeting, Dutch Baptists recognized that they had been isolated for the past few decades, said Boerrigter. The union is now intentionally becoming more involved internationally and with other denominational groups in the country.

While it is still at the beginning stages of initiating its vision, said Boerrigter, the union has already made strides toward its goal of being less isolated. Hosting the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering was a significant step that helped Dutch Baptists to connect with Baptists from around the world. Within the Netherlands, the Baptist seminary is developing new theological courses with schools of other denominations, such as the Pentecostal seminary and the Center for Reformed Theology.

The union is also working to strengthen relationships between Baptist churches within the country. The churches are currently involved in a “prayer relay.” Since the beginning of 2009 and culminating with a final celebration on November 14, each church in the union is responsible for praying for another church in the union for an entire week, 24 hours each day. The church receiving prayer informs the praying congregation of its particular needs and concerns. After the week of prayer has concluded, the young people from the praying congregation carry a light on a stick to the church for which they were praying, and then that church begins its week of prayer for the next congregation on the list.

Planting new churches is also a priority for the union. While previously most churches began as a mother-daughter relationship, now Dutch Baptists are utilizing a pioneer model. For example, families living in areas where there are a lot of Muslims and few churches began building relationships in their communities. This led to the start of two new churches in the towns of Utrecht and Amersfoort.

While the church is declining in the north of the country, which is where the church began, it is growing in the south and middle of the country. The union is exploring new ways to bring excitement and revitalization to the churches, especially among the youth.

The Baptists of the Netherlands are moving forward with vision, and, Boerrigter says, there are “a lot of chances in the coming years to get more people and churches involved.”

Lauren Weaver is a graduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, in the United States and former assistant editor in the Communications division of the Baptist World Alliance.
According to the Ministry of Tourism of the Bahamas, “It is better in the Bahamas,” and this certainly proved true during the 8th Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF) Youth Festival held July 22-26 in Nassau.

More than a year of planning, fasting and praying went into what has gone down in history as one of the largest gatherings of Caribbean Baptist youth. Five-hundred delegates from across the Caribbean and North America met at the Wyndham Nassau Resort for five days of worship, teaching, fun and fellowship. Gathered under the theme, “Stomp pun de enemy,” delegates were led to recognize that as Christian youth they are “under attack” and need to be “adequately armed” for the battle. They should also be “totally assured” of God’s presence in battle, and therefore should be “fully activated” for service in God’s ministry.

At the opening celebration on Wednesday night, attendees were treated to the culture of the Bahamas depicted through dance, singing, drama, mime and the comical but sobering performance of the outstanding Dynamite Daisy, a Bahamian comedienne and actress. To set the tone for the festival, Karl Johnson of Jamaica charged the delegates to “trust in the Lord with all their hearts and lean not to your own understanding” – necessary if they are to “Stomp pun the enemy.”

The hundreds of persons gathered for the opening celebration were also greeted by Emmett Dunn, youth director of the Baptist World Alliance; Peter Pinder, CBF executive secretary/treasurer; and William Thompson, Bahamas National Baptist Missionary & Educational Convention president. If delegates were unsure of what to expect at this Festival, by the end of the night they were fired up and ready to “Stomp pun de enemy.”

Each day, the youth joined in early morning intercessory prayer sessions which were rich and diverse under the leadership of the different country delegations present. Family group meetings resulted in new friendships and was a blessing each day to walk by the “friendship & encouragement table”
The 16th Baptist Youth World Conference will be held on the Southeast Asian island city-state of Singapore in July 2013.

The conference, the last of which was held in Leipzig, Germany, in 2008, takes place every five years. The first youth conference was held in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1931, with 400 delegates from 16 countries.

Emmett Dunn, Director of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Youth Department, stated that Singapore was chosen due to its ideal location in Asia, its relatively easy visa application regime, and an outstanding proposal to the BWA by the Singapore Baptist Convention (SBC). Dunn was also impressed by the close cooperation between the SBC and the country’s tourist board, and the belief by Singaporean Baptists that the conference will elevate the status of Baptists in the country as well as attract more youth to the church.

Singapore became the choice for the meetings after extensive site visits by the BWA to inspect conference, accommodation, transportation, and other facilities on the island nation of roughly 4.8 million people.

Peter Tang, general secretary of the SBC, expressed great delight that Singapore has been chosen to host the largest international gathering of Baptist youth. “This is a God-given opportunity to Singapore to play its part in the global Baptist community,” said Tang, a former businessman who, in 2006, gave up his business to be the full-time leader of the convention.

“With the dynamic growth of Baptist young people in Asia, we expect 6,000 to 7,000 young people to attend this conference,” said Dunn. The last Baptist Youth World Conference in Germany in 2008 had in attendance roughly 6,300 youth comprising 97 nationalities from 88 countries.

“The entire Baptist community shares the joy and exuberance that Singapore is given this honor, especially as more than 50 percent of Singapore is below the age of 25,” said Tang. “The youth will rise to the challenge to make it a spiritual blessing and life transforming experience,” he told the BWA.

Planning for the youth conference will begin in earnest in March 2010 when the BWA Youth Department’s International Program Committee, chaired by Debra Berry of the United States, meets at the BWA Center in the United States.

A Local Arrangements Committee is to be formed in Singapore early in 2010, and the theme for the conference is expected to be announced during the Baptist World Congress to be held in Honolulu, Hawaii, from July 28 to August 1 next year.

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Central Americans Challenged to
“GET OUT INTO SOCIETY”

By Tony Cupit

British evangelist Dennis Pethers made the startling claim that in most places only three in 100 Baptists actually share their faith in Jesus Christ. He said, “We know we should, we are taught we should, we feel guilty that we do not – but the reality is that only three percent of Baptists intentionally speak to others about our faith in the risen Saviour.”

Pethers presented a major paper at the 15th international BWA Living Water conference in Panama City, a conference designed for and by Baptists of Central America on the vital topics of evangelism and servant leadership.

His stirring challenge for Baptists to concentrate more on getting out into society to discuss faith in Jesus Christ was a salutary word to the 200 delegates gathered in Panama City from September 6-9. He asserted that for decades, Baptists have believed that getting people into church so they could hear the Gospel preached was the way to do evangelism; that people will just come into our churches as they may have done in years gone by. However, experience is proving that most people no longer see value in attending church and many have no idea what church and our faith is all about. “Of course we want people to come to church,” he said, “but as a result of them first having been witnessed to by Christ’s people sharing their faith-stories out in the marketplace.”

The Panama City Living Water conference for Central American countries – Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua – was part of a series of Living Water events put on by the BWA during the quinquennium 2005-2010. This strategy seeks to encourage and equip Baptists everywhere to proclaim and demonstrate the Good News in Jesus Christ and to do so with a servant spirit. Like at preceding conferences, delegates were receptive to the themes and embraced the creativity that the British evangelist Dennis Pethers made the startling claim that in most places only three in 100 Baptists actually share their faith in Jesus Christ. He said, “We know we should, we are taught we should, we feel guilty that we do not – but the reality is that only three percent of Baptists intentionally speak to others about our faith in the risen Saviour.”

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Living Water motif provides. No major session passed without a segment featuring water in some fashion or another. There was water pouring, “passing the peace” with a cup in hand, a hand-washing ceremony, a memorable foot-washing, and a moment when we all drank together from special water bottles to express our oneness in Christ. The national leaders insisted that every session should be a reminder that Christ is the Living Water.

Along with the more than 200 delegates from Central America, about 1,000 Panamanian Baptists attended the evening sessions. Those gathered were stirred by messages from Latin American leaders Daniel Carro, Raquel Contreras and Alberto Prokopchuk. Several choirs from churches in Panama City sang with joy and great skill and young people proclaimed their faith through creative gospel dance.

The Lord’s Supper, led by Francisco Medina, president of the Baptist Convention of Panama, assisted by Union of Baptists in Latin America President, Ivan Martinez from Venezuela, was a true worship experience. A specially created Living Water prayer quilt provided a “sacred space” for people to pray silently in groups or alone.

The foot-washing that accompanied the Lord’s Supper reminded delegates of the example of self-giving that our Lord exhibited during His life on earth. Once again, the Spirit of God revealed to us the beauty of Jesus as we celebrated Christ the Living Water in Panama City.

Reports from the various Central American conventions and unions on the witness of their churches and future objectives in outreach, revealed a people intent on proclaiming Christ to the societies where they are situated.

It is to be hoped that, as a consequence of the BWA Living Water strategy, the percentage of Baptists intentionally witnessing to faith in Jesus Christ will exceed the three percent about which this Panama Living Water Conference heard. The follow-up efforts to this event will endeavor to work to that end.

Tony Cupit of Australia is the coordinator of the Living Water program of the Baptist World Alliance.

Approximately 150 copies of The Acts of the Apostles: Four Centuries of Baptist Interpretation were made available to persons attending the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering, in Ede, Netherlands, from July 27 to August 1.

Edited by Beth Allison Barr, Bill J. Leonard, Mikeal C. Parsons, and C. Douglas Weaver, with biblical text translation by Helen Barrett Montgomery, the 900-plus page volume includes interpretations on the Acts of the Apostles by various Baptist preachers and leaders including John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, Henry Lawrence, Dan Taylor, H. Wheeler Robinson and Rick Warren. It includes excerpts from the First and Second London Baptist Confessions of Faith, the Somerset

Illustrating the diversity of Baptist responses to scripture from the 17th century to the present.

Carey Newman (right), Director of Baylor University Press, signs copies of the “Baptists’ Bible” during the book launch at the BWA Annual Gathering.
Hawai‘i Prepares to Host Thousands of Baptists in 2010

By Lauren Weaver

Hawai‘i Baptists are preparing to welcome the world to the islands for the 20th Baptist World Congress.

Rick Lazor, Baptist pastor in Honolulu and chair of the Local Arrangements Committee for the congress, believes that Hawai‘i is a good venue for the event because of the diversity of cultures in the state of 1.3 million people.

“A diverse experience is amplified when you get to attend one in a society that already relishes cultural and ethnic diversity,” he said.

The congress, to be held July 28 to August 1, 2010, in Honolulu, will be international in scope, drawing music, Bible study leaders, and plenary speakers from some of the 119 countries and various cultures represented in the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

Plenary speakers for the congress come from different regions of the BWA. President David Coffey from the United Kingdom will speak on the opening night. Other speakers throughout the week include Karl Johnson, general secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union; Paul Msiza, president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship and general secretary of the Baptist Convention of South Africa; Alongla Aier, associate professor in English and communication at the Oriental Theological Seminary in the Northeast Indian State of Nagaland; and Lance Watson, senior pastor of St. Paul’s Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, in the United States.

“These are people the world needs to hear,” said Lazor. “If you haven’t heard their names before, you will know their names afterwards.”

In addition to experiencing international worship and fellowship, Congress attendees will learn more about Hawai‘i and about Polynesian culture. Several sessions will feature Polynesian music and dance.

On the opening night, Hawai‘i will welcome Baptists from around the world with a traditional protocol ceremony that consists of “oli,” chants and music of praise, and “ho‘okupu,” the exchange of gifts.

The congress theme, “Hear the Spirit,” drawn from verses in Revelation 2 and 3, “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches,” has special significance for Christians of Hawai‘i.

Ancient Hawaiian religion talks a lot about ‘mana,’ or spiritual power. This is similar to a pantheistic belief that God is present in all things. We need to show that the true Spirit is found in the person of Christ.”

In addition to sharing the culture of the islands with worldwide Baptists, Baptists in Hawai‘i, which number about 15,000, are eager to learn from their brothers and sisters from around the world, said Lazor. We want to “use our ears more than our mouths” during the congress. “We want to hear how the world does ministry.”

Mission will be a strong emphasis of the congress. Lazor’s hope is that before, during and after the event, the more than 10,000 Baptists expected to attend will be “on the streets blessing the city” of Honolulu.

“People usually breeze into Hawai‘i, enjoy themselves and leave. If the BWA could leave a lasting impression on the city, that would be really helpful.”

There will be myriad opportunities for congress attendees to share their faith and serve the people of the state, where perhaps only 10 percent of the population attends a church in which the message of Christ’s salvation is clearly delivered.

While details of the mission projects are still being finalized, potential activities include a weekend walkathon to benefit the Hawai‘i Food Bank – from which most churches draw supplies for their own food pantries; preparation of meals at a food kitchen; home repairs for the elderly; spending time with the homeless population in Honolulu parks; assisting with a furniture ministry for new immigrants, as well as other mission opportunities.

It is also possible to custom-design a mission project for a church group or individual. The BWA Congress website, www.bwacongress2010.org, is equipped with a form that can be filled out for churches from around the world to partner with churches in Hawai‘i. Visiting church groups can state the type of project they would like to do, and Hawai‘i churches can state needs that they have.

There is also a volunteer application on the website which persons can submit if they would like to provide assistance during the Congress. Volunteers are needed for a variety of ministry areas including office work, worship and music assistance, hospitality, prayer ministry, and physical labor like loading and unloading.
Before the congress begins, Baptist women from around the world will gather for the BWA Women’s Leadership Conference. The women’s meetings will be held July 24-27 at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, and will have as its theme, “In Step with the Spirit.”

Information on the women’s conference can be found on the BWA Women’s department website, www.bwawd.org. “One year out,” said Lazor, “there is a lot of excitement” about the congress. To register to attend the congress, visit www.bwacongress2010.org.
In Memoriam

Lilian Lim Hui Kiau,

In Memoriam

Lilian Lim Hui Kiau, president of the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary (ABGTS), died on Thursday, June 25, in Singapore.

Lim became one of only a few Baptist women in Asia to be elected to lead a major theological seminary when she was named head of ABGTS, a consortium of nine theological schools in eight countries, in 2005.

Described by colleagues as “a simple lady with a simple faith,” Lim was previously Professor of New Testament and Academic Dean at the Baptist Theological Seminary (BTS) of Singapore, one of the nine schools that form the ABGTS consortium. She received her theological training at BTS and at the Southern Baptist Seminary (SBTS) in Louisville, Kentucky, in the United States. She earned her PhD from SBTS in 1994.

She served on the executive of the Singapore Baptist Convention and the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF), one of six regional fellowships of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). She was also a member of the board of directors of Global Women, a mainly Baptist organization dedicated to empowering women for service and mission globally, and to creating partnerships across national borders and artificial divisions.

Lim was a member of the BWA team participating in the ongoing Baptist-Roman Catholic Conversations between the BWA and the Vatican. She presented papers on various topics at BWA and APBF events, including at the BWA-sponsored Baptist International Conference on Theological Education in Prague, Czech Republic, in July 2008. She wrote one of the Bible studies that will be used during the 20th International Conference on Theological Education in Prague, Czech Republic, in July 2008. She wrote one of the Bible studies that will be used during the 20th Baptist World Congress to be held in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 2010.

“My association with Lilian started three years ago with our participation in the Baptist-Roman Catholic theological conversations,” said BWA General Secretary Neville Callam. “Lilian was a fine person with an alert mind and a loving and gentle spirit. Ever looking beneath the surface of things as they appear, she was a fine interpreter of people, texts and events. She had a deep and abiding faith in God and she spent herself in the service of others,” the BWA leader said in his tribute.

“In the passing of Lilian, the entire community of theological students and teachers in Asia has lost a distinguished leader and the Baptist World Alliance a gifted theologian and a sensitive soul. May her soul rest in peace,” said Callam.

A Chinese Singaporean, Lim was one of the subjects of the 2003 BWA book, “Stars Lighting up the Sky: Stories of Contemporary Christian Heroes” by Tony Cupit, a former BWA director. She faced opposition from her traditional Chinese family when she converted to Christianity at a young age, and she battled lifelong illness. “Throughout, she has maintained deep faith in Christ despite looking death in the face, enduring pain and other challenges to life and faith,” Cupit wrote.

A memorial service took place at Calvary Baptist Church in Singapore, on June 28, followed by cremation.

Jan Bowman

of New Zealand, president of the Baptist Women’s Union of the South West Pacific from 1988-1993, died on June 13. By virtue of her position as president, she also served as a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance Women’s Department (BWAWD).

Bowman was music director for the BWAWD Leadership Conference and other events at the 1985 Baptist World Congress in Los Angeles, California, USA. At the BWAWD conference in 1990 in Seoul, Korea, she staged presentations from her continental group for the entire assembly. She was named general program chair for the world congress of Baptist women in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1995.

In New Zealand, Bowman held several top positions in leadership. She was president of the Auckland Baptist Association in 1983, the second woman ever to hold this post. From 2004-2005, she was president of the Baptist Missionary Fellowship of New Zealand. Bowman was district governor of Zonta of New Zealand and served as international director of Zonta from 2003-2005. Zonta is an organization of executives and professionals who work to advance the status of women worldwide through service and advocacy.

In recognition of her life of service, Bowman was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit which is given by Queen Elizabeth II to persons who “have rendered meritorious service to the Crown and nation or who have become distinguished by their eminence, talents, contributions or other merits.”

A memorial service was held at Remuera Baptist Church, Auckland, New Zealand, on June 17.

John H. Foster,


Foster was senior pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Norfolk, Virginia, in the United States, for 41 years, retiring in 2007. He served as president of the Virginia Baptist Association and is a former chair of the National Baptist Sunday School Publications Board.

He was a lifetime member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and served on the Norfolk school board from 1977 until his election to the Norfolk city council in 1984, where he served for 10 years.

In 2003, he received the First Citizen Distinguished Service Award from the Cosmopolitan Club of Norfolk. The Virginia House of Delegates recognized Foster in 2004 as playing “a pioneering role during the 1980s in promoting racial reconciliation, consensus, and cooperation” in Norfolk.

He earned undergraduate and graduate divinity degrees at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, and a doctorate in ministry degree from Howard University in Washington, DC.

Foster created a continuing education program at Shiloh Baptist Church to help pregnant teenagers continue their schooling. “When most people didn’t help those young ladies, he stepped up,” said Joseph N. Green Jr., who served with Foster on the city council in the 1980s.

Foster is survived by wife Salona, and sons Laguana and Savon.

Funeral services were held at Shiloh Baptist Church in Norfolk on August 22.
How might we mark the 400th anniversary of Baptist witness? This was a question we faced as we began to make plans for the BWA Annual Gathering in Ede. As a worldwide movement, hardly could we be content to focus merely on our historic origins; nor could we use the time to engage in prideful gloating over past achievements, if these were segregated from the clear acknowledgment of the failures of our past and our present. We decided to use the worship occasions in Ede as a stimulus for recalling some milestones in the past with a view to stimulating us to ask ourselves the question, “Have we lost anything?”

We remembered some of our founding leaders. John Smyth helped us to ask ourselves, “Have we lost the capacity to see how our attitudes can sometimes be destructive, and have we developed patterns of confession that can set us free?” Thomas Helwys showed us how not to run from life-threatening challenges on the home front, but instead to face the music, speak the truth respectfully and face the consequences for so doing.

We remembered some of our great missioners. George Liele reminded us that large libraries and attractive financial compensation are not adequate prerequisites of faithful pastoral service. Prompted by a sense of the urgency of the “Great Commission,” William Carey noted how prayer must accompany work to obtain the things we pray for. Questioning the narrowness of our vision and the scope of our dreams, Johann Oncken emphasized the need for the strength and blessing the Spirit affords to aid our eagerness to spread the Gospel. Lottie Moon challenged us to remember the hard work and sacrificial service of pioneers who preach Christ in foreign lands and Ann Judson showed us how joy in doing the will of God must not be confused with pleasure that comes from access to the creature comforts.

We considered challenges from some of our Baptist prophets of social consciousness. We listened as Samuel Sharpe showed how, with confidence in the hope of all believers in Christ, one can fight against injustice fearlessly. We heard William Knibb, standing before the dragon of chattel slavery, sounding the clarion call for action in defense of human liberty. We were transported to great heights by the oratory and wisdom of Martin Luther King Jr. as he characterized the sin of oppression and the need for human solidarity if the radiant stars of love are to shine through the dark clouds of injustice.

During our annual memorial service on the final day of the Gathering, we reflected on what two of our great theologians wrote. G. H. Morling asked us whether we still hold to the fundamental doctrines in the ancient creeds of the church – and also in Baptist creeds and statements of faith – such as the claim that “He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.” For his part, Henry Wheeler Robinson issued a passionate call for acknowledgment of the work of the Spirit in vivifying Christian life and witness – thereby signaling the start of the journey from Ede, where the BWA met for the Annual Gathering, to Hawai’i for next year’s Baptist World Congress that will have the theme, “Hear the spirit.”

We have to ask ourselves, “Have we lost anything?” Anything of the passion for evangelism that should burn brightly in the heart of every Christian? Anything of the zeal for justice that springs endlessly from bowels of Christian compassion? Anything of the costly confidence in the Word of God that might make us seem strange in an age of unbelief? Anything of the firm reliance on the enabling of the Holy Spirit without which we dare not continue boldly in the Christian pilgrimage?

Now is as good a time as any for us to note how wonderfully God has blessed us over these past 400 years. It is also a very good time to ask whether we have lost any of the passion, the zeal and the confidence, the reliance on God, without which our vision and our witness can never match, much less exceed, those of our forbears whose faithful witness we celebrate this year.

Will those who come behind us call us faithful?
Hear the Spirit
at the
20th Baptist World Congress

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Congress Website: www.bwacongress2010.org
July 28 – August 1, 2010
Hawai‘i Convention Center, Honolulu, Hawai‘i