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Thank you for showing the love of Christ to the world!
The unanimous vote by the Baptist World Alliance General Council to approve the Covenant on Intra-Baptist Relations, named Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships, is perhaps the most significant recent development in the organized international Baptist movement.

The decision to affirm the Covenant represents the resolute determination of the BWA to build on the gains secured for the worldwide Baptist movement by the salutary efforts Gerhard Class and Denton Lotz made to internationalize the BWA. Part of the richness of the legacy of these outstanding former BWA general secretaries is the success they secured for the project to make the BWA a global organization rather than merely a North Atlantic one.

From the very beginning, the human originators of the BWA intended to found an organization “more fully to manifest the essential oneness in the Lord Jesus ... of the Churches of the Baptist order and faith ... extending over every part of the world.” Over the years, successive BWA leaders have understood that, with the massive growth of Baptist witness in the Two-Thirds World, the only way to realize the dream participants had at the inaugural Baptist World Congress in 1905, and of those they chose to frame the BWA constitution, was to mount a drive to recruit into BWA membership as many Baptist groups as possible from the Global South. Not surprisingly, over the last 10 years, 19 of the 23 conventions and unions joining the BWA have come from the Global South.

This mushrooming of BWA membership with the majority of newcomers not originating in the Global West brought its challenges. The principal challenge was how to negotiate relationships that formerly rested on parent/child assumptions but that now needed to be understood as collegial relations within a family where God is parent. How would representatives of churches that saw themselves as “sending churches” reaching out to start and to assist young, “receiving churches” now relate to representatives of these “receiving churches” who sat beside them in the BWA General Council as equals within the BWA family? How would persons from the Global West respond when they no longer find themselves in a position of dominance in the BWA? How would true partnership based on mutuality of respect and reciprocal sharing be demonstrated in the worldwide Baptist movement?

The need existed for all participants in the BWA organization to affirm a set of values that should characterize the way they relate to each other when they assemble at BWA events. The set of principles enunciated in the Covenant on Intra-Baptist Relations are drawn from Scripture and are meant to inspire Baptists to demonstrate the love of God and neighbor that is a fundamental part of their vocation. The Covenant provides a standard against which we may assess our progress in living into the oneness as Baptist Christians in one aspect of our inter-relationships, namely, how we think about each other, how we treat each other, how we love each other in all our dealings while attending BWA events. The cultivation of mutual respect in the fertile field of neighbor love will enable us to make room in our hearts for other Baptists. Then, not only at BWA events, but in all our dealings with each other, paternalism, prejudice and haughtiness will be put to flight and the love of Christ will triumph.
The 16th Baptist Youth World Conference ended on July 21 with scores of youth responding to the call to a life of discipleship as they went to the front of the stage to participate in a prayer of commitment.

Thembelani Jentile, a South African Baptist pastor and newspaper columnist, the main speaker at the closing event, told the roughly 2,500 youth from 65 countries that “Jesus sent out disciples so that they could make other disciples.”

Asserting that discipleship living and making are not human endeavors but that they stem from God’s anointing and power, Jentile said “it will take all power for the gospel to be preached, and for souls to be won, and for disciples to be made.”

Referring to Jesus’ Great Commission in Matthew 28, he indicated that “the nations we are going to disciple are neither geographical nor are they political countries, like China or Turkey, but they are people or ethnic groups of the world.”

In making his appeal, Jentile invited youth to move from their seats and make a commitment to being and making disciples.

Rachael Tan, former associate dean at the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary and a PhD candidate, led the large gathering to reflect on the meaning of servanthood in the life of the believer. She stooped on stage and washed the feet of one of the delegates attending the conference, dramatically drawing attention to the power behind Jesus’ washing of his disciples’ feet as recounted in John’s gospel.

“Why would Jesus, the greatest of all, do such a lowly task?” Tan asked. “It is because Jesus loved them and showed them the full extent of his love.” The remarkable thing, Tan pointed out, was that Jesus washed the feet of those who would deny and betray him. “Did he also wash the feet of Peter even if he knew that a few hours later this same Peter would deny him three times? Did he also wash the feet of Judas whom the Lord knew would eventually betray him with a kiss? Yes, every single one of them.”

She told the audience that, regardless of their present social status or level of achievements they should commit themselves to a life of service, just as Jesus did. “Perhaps a sister in your church who always feels ‘out of place’ and ‘left out’ in a lot of the happenings in your youth group needs someone to befriend her. Perhaps an older lady in the church who is living alone in an apartment needs someone to help clean her house or water her plants,” Tan stated. “Perhaps a disabled brother needs someone to fetch him so he can go to church every Sunday. Perhaps some orphans or elderly people in nursing homes need people to bring food to them. Will you be the hands and feet of Jesus to serve them and meet their needs?”

Christian Rommert, a Baptist youth leader in Germany, said that life in Christ is not about rules or systems, but about relationships. He cautioned the large gathering against “going through the motions (of worship) without the inner motivation” and against “having the habits of faith without the heart of faith.”

Rommert claimed that religion often “becomes more of a ritual than a real thing… more of a pattern than power… more structure than Spirit.” Christianity, he said, “is a way of loving, a way of forgiving, a way of caring, a way of prayer, a way of worship, a way of thanksgiving and praise, and a way of being in tune with the Spirit of Jesus.”

Referring to the problems posed by secularism, Rommert stated that “there are some things between heaven and earth we don’t understand, but we have to believe them.” This is difficult for countries such as Germany, which prides itself as “the land of poets and thinkers” and for its history in science, university education and literature. “But sometimes it seems like we get into a dead-end with all of our knowledge. We get lost and feel thirsty and hungry and empty.”

Diana Francis, a television personality and president of the Student Christian Movement in the Bahamas, reminded youth delegates that God is constantly reaching out to them despite their personal circumstance or situation. God, she said, “specializes in broken lives, damaged people that the world condemns.”

(Continued on next page)
encouraged the youth to get their validation from God rather than from their peers. “You may be seeking validation, acceptance, value, self-worth, but God reached down through Jesus Christ to give you that validation and identity.” She declared that “regardless of how dark it gets, how bad things may become, know that behind every dark cloud, there is a silver lining.”

Argentinian Lucas Leys, president of Vida Publishers, declared that Christ’s love for humanity is immeasurable. Everyone, he said, is included in God’s love. “If there was only one person in the world, Christ would have died for that person,” the Argentinian said. “Christ paid a high price with his blood because of the great value placed on us.”

Canadian Baptist pastor Dave Overholt told the throng of young people that Jesus has invited them to enter into partnership, one “between Jesus and His Father.” This partnership involves embracing Jesus’ revelation of God and sharing or passing on this revelation to others. “There is a partnership of revealing God to those we gave us,” Overholt said. “There is a partnership, God opens doors or gives us people and we speak clearly . . . we have an opportunity to reveal God to those whom God brings to us.”

Edmund Chan, an evangelical pastor in Singapore, said “the gospel is not about making bad people good but enabling those who are dead (in spirit) to be alive, waking those who are asleep, and making those who are awake, alert.”

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam, who brought greetings at the opening event, urged the assembled youth “to defy the destructive secularism that seeks to push religious faith to the fringes of society” and to “let the world know the undeniable truth that faith in Jesus Christ is alive and well.”

The BWA leader expressed the hope that those attending the conference, planned and sponsored by the BWA and normally held every five years, will “find opportunity for the renewal of your faith as you hear stories of young people from around the world whose lives are being transformed through their fellowship with Christ.”

Callam encouraged the youth to share their faith, to submit themselves to Christ, and to “discover new dimensions of that true joy that is to be found through friendship with Jesus.”

A number of seminars and workshops exploring issues relevant to youth, young adults and youth leaders, were held during the Baptist Youth World Conference in Singapore.

Topics for youth included the dynamics of worship leading, making Bible study “personal,” living out one’s faith in school, the church as a prophetic community, sports ministry, environmental based ministry, the role of youth in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and sex.

Young adults and youth leaders explored the maximization of one’s call and ministry and helping youth to evangelize and develop and live out an incarnational faith at school, college and university. Sessions examined why youth are leaving the church and how best to integrate them into the life of the church through relevant ministries, and ways to help rescue youth from risky behaviors.

Baptist World Alliance President John Upton and General Secretary Neville Callam led separate sessions on the history of the Baptist movement since its founding in 1609 and the ministry of the BWA since its inception in 1905. The sessions, however, were primarily aimed at responding to questions asked by participants.

Callam informed participants of a number of ministries in Asia in which the BWA and its various agencies are engaged. These include the training of midwives in Papua New Guinea “where mothers die in childbirth because of the absence of maternity service”; outreach to lepers, who are normally shut out from their communities, in India; literacy programs in Nepal; and assistance in disaster relief in China, Bangladesh, Japan and Thailand.

“God wants us to help and so we have no option but to help meet people’s needs at home and abroad,” Callam said. He indicated that “in a number of countries, Baptist churches or groups operate hospitals for the sake of the sick, schools to contribute to the education of young and old alike, run clinics and orphanages to meet a real need, and introduce and support agricultural projects for community development.”

In addition to the seminars, family group Bible studies encouraged youth from various
During the 16th Baptist Youth World Conference in Singapore, youth were reminded that part of the call to being Christian is a commitment to justice and reaching out to those in need. 

Asha Sanchu, founder and director of MIqlat Ministry, based in Dimapur in the Northeast Indian state of Nagaland, told her story of rescuing women and girls from the sex trade, despite threats on her life. “Once some men [who are involved in the sex trade] held a gun to my head and told me to stop what I’m doing. At first I was afraid, but the threats happen so often now that I got used to it and I’m no longer scared.”

She said it is not enough to save women from the sex trade; they also need to be provided with life skills that enhance their chances of survival. This includes training that enables these women and girls to earn a living. Since 2004, Miqlat has helped more than 200 women to start their own businesses and to become nurses and other trained professionals.

Brickson Sam of Sierra Leone has played a part in lowering the incidences of sickness, disability and deaths caused by malaria in his country. Sam, immediate past president of the All Africa Baptist Youth Fellowship and a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance Youth Department, led a program in which Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the BWA, helped to fund the distribution of 1,000 insecticide-treated bed nets provided by His Nets, a Christian ministry based in Oklahoma in the United States.

Sam told the gathering that the net distribution is a demonstration of Matthew 25 and that clothing the naked, feeding the hungry and helping the stranger is part of the commitment to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wado Saw, a Myanmar refugee in the Mae La camp on the Thai-Myanmar border, testified to the difficulties faced by the tens of thousands of refugees from Myanmar who have been displaced due to conflicts in their homeland. Despite their desire for home, it is unlikely that their dreams will be realized anytime soon.

Youth made monetary and in-kind donations toward school kits for refugee children in Thailand. There are an estimated 31,000 school children from Myanmar living in seven refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border.

A majority of the delegates attending the youth conference packaged more than 250,000 meals from supplies provided by Stop Hunger Now and funded by contributions received by the BWA. Two 20ft containers were filled for distribution in Asia. One American participant from New York declared, “This is something my church can do, perhaps during Thanksgiving (in November) or Christmas. I’m going to share this vision with my pastor when I get back home. I know this is something she will be open to doing.”
Constitutional Changes

A number of important constitutional changes were adopted by the General Council. The provision that restricted membership on the Executive Committee to 25 persons has been removed. In the previous constitutional changes that took effect in 2009, vice presidents were excluded from the Executive Committee but that has been reversed. Vice presidents will now be included on the Executive.

The Executive Committee now has a more direct role in the appointment of senior BWA staff. In the case of the general secretary, that body shall name a search committee for the position, with the search committee’s recommendation taken to the General Council. For elected staff directors, the Executive Committee shall consider the recommendations made by a search committee consultatively named by the general secretary and the chair of the Human Resources Committee.

The election of president, first vice president, vice presidents and treasurer is now vested in the General Council, rather than the Baptist World Congress, as previously applied. The Nominations Committee may make its nominations for voting to the General Council in the year preceding the congress. The next Baptist World Congress, which is normally held every five years, will be in Durban, South Africa, in July 2015. The officers, which are expected to be elected by the General Council in July 2014, will be presented to that congress.

The General Council is now authorized to make appointments of officers if unexpected vacancies occur. These persons shall serve until the conclusion of the next Baptist World Congress. The Executive Committee has been empowered to make emergency acting appointments of officers “if the time delay before the next General Council is deemed to be too long.”

The president-elect, who is now likely to be chosen one year before the Congress, shall sit as an ex-officio officer on the Nominations Committee, along with the president and general secretary.

Article VII of the bylaws has been amended to exclude specific reference to “the clusters of commitment” and instead refers to “main divisions of work adopted from time to time by the General Council.”

A notice of motion that BWA regional secretaries be named to and seated as members of the General Council was passed for consideration at the 2014 General Council.

Documents Ratified

A covenant document, Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships, which aims to provide a framework for BWA response to the diversity of language, culture, opinions and perspectives in meetings and in the various operations of the international body, was ratified by the General Council after it was endorsed by the BWA Executive Committee in March of this year.

The report of the second round of Baptist-Catholic theological conversations, which took place from 2006-2010, was endorsed. Published as a paperback book, it can be purchased from Amazon and other online bookstores.

New Member Organizations

Five organizations were accepted as members of the BWA by the General Council. Two groups from Haiti were accepted into membership. The Baptist Mission of South Haiti was formed in 1936 and has 50,000 members in 488 churches. The Connection of Haitian Baptist Churches for Integral Mission comprises 15,000 members in 58 churches and was established in 2004. Both groups join the Haiti Baptist Convention and Baptist Haiti Mission as BWA members in the Caribbean nation.

Another Caribbean applicant, the Turks and Caicos Islands Baptist Union is an association of 500 members in 13 churches and was established in the 1830s.

The Baptist Church of Congo was formed in 1996 and has 2,850 members in 26 churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It becomes the eleventh BWA member in the DRC, a vast country with greater land area than Western Europe.

A third Brazilian group has gained BWA membership, the Convention of Independent Baptist Churches. It has 67,908 members in 437 churches, and joins the Brazilian Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention in the largest country in South America.

Resolutions

Sixteen resolutions were passed by the General Council. Baptists around the world were encouraged to pray for Nelson Mandela, his family, and the people of South Africa and “to follow Mandela’s example of courage, grace, truth and reconciliation in our dealings with others.”

The government of the United States was asked to lift its long standing embargo on Cuba. Declaring “that more than two decades have passed since the end of the Cold War, and that most negative manifestations of that struggle have been ameliorated, except for the continuing USA embargo against Cuba begun in 1960,” the BWA encouraged “the governments of USA and Cuba to set in place a process for negotiating legitimate bilateral grievances.”

Baptists, the BWA stated, should “stand in solidarity with Cuban Baptists who have been negatively impacted by this embargo.”

The BWA expressed concern about situations in the Middle East and North Africa, noting “that attacks by Islamic extremists have victimized men, women and children in more than one location,” and that “Christians have been targeted and persecuted in contexts where they have been perceived to be loyal to specific regimes in several countries.”
With respect to Syria, “governments [should] refrain from sending or selling armaments to the forces in conflict in Syria and instead support the efforts of those who are working toward a negotiated peace and provide essential humanitarian resources to assist refugees in this situation of conflict.” The United Nations and governments should “work cooperatively to assist those countries (in North Africa and the Middle East) in the protection of all the rights of all their citizens.”

Conflicts in Myanmar continue to raise concerns within the BWA, the most recent in Kachin State. Many Kachins are Baptist Christians. In June 2011, a seventeen-year cease-fire between the Myanmar army and the Kachin Independence Army broke down and, although the president of Myanmar ordered the military on December 10, 2011, to stop their offensive, the war in the Kachin State has escalated. As a result, large numbers of innocent civilians have been killed and many women have been raped as part of a strategy of violence. “More than 200 Kachin Baptist villages have been lost and at least 66 places of worship have been destroyed. The war has forced more than 100,000 civilians to flee their homes and live in camps as Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs),” the BWA resolution notes.

Baptists are being urged “to stand with our Kachin Christian brothers and sisters in Myanmar and around the world to find solutions to this conflict,” and “to support actions of the United Nations and other nongovernmental organizations to promote relief work, establish justice, and return peace to this land.”

On the broader subject of displaced persons, another resolution encourages Baptists “to uphold the human rights of all people at all times, including the rights of displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees,” and “to act as advocates for displaced persons and to develop plans to respond with compassion and hospitality to the needs of displaced persons.”

Meeting in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, during the first week of July, members of the Baptist World Alliance General Council unanimously ratified a document designed to guide how Baptists from different cultures, languages, and backgrounds treat one another. The document, Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships, comes after more than four years of reflection and consideration by a special commission created by BWA General Secretary Neville Callam. Led by Daniel Vestal and Edward Wheeler, the commission brought its final document for a vote at the 2013 BWA Annual Gathering.

“The Baptist World Alliance exists to express, as the constitution says, ‘the essential oneness of Baptist people’ across the world,” Callam stated during the Annual Gathering as he explained the need for the document. “The question is how do we live into that oneness when there is so much diversity characterizing us? And how do we manifest that oneness in the midst of this diversity that is theologically admissible and that is potentially enriching?”

Before the General Council vote, members of the special commission and other BWA leaders led an open forum to provide a time and space for conversations about the document. As Baptists entered the large meeting room for the forum, they found a table with copies of the document in 20 different languages. BWA leaders announced their intention for the document to be translated into even more languages in the future to broaden its use.

“This gives us a chance to truly be the physical body of Christ,” BWA President John Upton said during the forum about the document.

Although noting that the diversity of the global Baptist community created difficulties and conflicts sparking the need for the new document, BWA leaders at the forum also praised that same diversity as a key to the strength of the BWA.

“The Baptist World Alliance is a diverse crowd,” Callam stated as he explained the need for the Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships. “It is a family that is rich in terms of the multiple cultures, the multiple styles, the multiplicity of approaches that one can find in our ecclesiastical community.”

Balancing the difficulties and blessings of diversity also emerged as a theme in the Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships. “…the BWA commitment to open dialogue and honest communication in the midst of our profound diversity also presents the BWA with perhaps the greatest challenge to the unity we are called to maintain,” the document reads. “That challenge comes in the form of the difficulty of achieving clear, precise and commonly-understood communication through the use of language, especially when translation from one language to multiple languages is involved.”

With several of the statements in the document dealing with communicating across language, cultural, and other barriers, special commission leader Vestal emphasized the communication aspect in his remarks at the forum.

“I believe the time has come for us to talk about how we talk,” Vestal stated. “I don’t know which is harder: to talk in a way that pleases God or to listen in a way that pleases God. I do know they’re both very hard. And we need the Holy Spirit to help us do those well.”

Vestal added that he prays the Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships “will be an instrument of the Holy Spirit to help us learn how to talk and learn how to listen in ways that please the Lord.”

Vestal and the BWA leaders at the forum talked about the need to build upon the document by translating it into more languages, making it widely available in publications at future BWA gatherings, producing Bible studies based on its principles, and working to implement it at BWA gatherings through what Callam called “mutual accountability.”

Embracing the spirit of this text, the forum held during the BWA Annual Gathering included numerous comments and questions from participants from multiple countries. Most of those who spoke during the forum offered strong affirmations of the document, followed days later by the General Council’s unanimous vote for adoption.
More than 400 Baptist leaders, theologians, teachers, pastors and others from 40 countries were in Jamaica for the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering from July 1-6 in the north coast town of Ocho Rios.

A group of 16 participants attending the Gathering took the opportunity to tour a number of historical sites significant to Baptists on the Caribbean island.

Visits were made to the site of the first Baptist church in western Jamaica, founded in 1791 by Moses Baker, a former African American slave who had moved to the island. Baptist witness had begun in Jamaica in 1783 under the leadership of another African American, George Liele, who planted the first church in Kingston, Jamaica’s capital.

Locations associated with Baptist deacon and Jamaican National Hero Samuel Sharpe were part of the tour. These included Burchell Baptist Church in Montego Bay where Sharpe was a deacon and where it is believed his remains are interred under the pulpit; as well as Sam Sharpe Square in the heart of the city where there is a monument in his honor and another monument listing the names of those who were punished for their roles in the slave revolt that Sharpe led in the 1830s.

Participants at the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering heard the story of the process leading to the publication of the Jamaica New Testament (JNT), the first translation of the New Testament in the heart language of most Jamaicans, whose country’s official language is English.

Jamaican, sometimes called patois, is a Creole language. Its vocabulary is a unique mix of English words and the languages used in the countries from which enslaved Africans were transported to Jamaica. The grammatical structure reflects that of the African languages indigenous to the enslaved. It emerged during the period when enslaved blacks from different language regions of Africa, mostly from West Africa, needed to find a way to communicate with one another in their new home, Jamaica. In publications that appeared in 1961 and 1967, Jamaica-born scholar, Frederic Cassidy, introduced a Jamaican orthography. This is the form utilized by the translators of the JNT.

Courtney Stewart, executive secretary of the Bible Society of the West Indies (BSWI), said the project “is a catalyst for national liberation/emancipation, both religiously and socially.” He stated that “the translation into Jamaican of the written Word about the living Word speaks to an incarnation of God in the reality of ordinary Jamaicans.” It makes God “accessible to the Jamaican people.”

The translation, Stewart declared, “Mirrors the translation of God’s eternal Word into a specific sub-group of humanity.” Furthermore, “the translation of the Scriptures into Jamaican will lead the way in liberating the language by causing it to take on a standardized form in order to take on new roles or be used in formal domains.”

Jamaican educator and writer, Faith Linton, a leading advocate for the JNT project, drew evidence from research conducted in Linguistics and Neuroscience to urge recognition of the critical role of the mother tongue in human development. Linton asserted that the failure to teach Jamaicans in their heart language may be at the root of the literacy problem in the country. Locating the JNT project in the need for Jamaicans to be educated in the mother tongue and the teaching of English as a second language, Linton asserted that the JNT “could become a catalyst for change.”

Drawing upon anecdotal evidence, Linton made a case for the positive reception and effect of the use of the JNT. She concluded that “the JNT has sparked a movement which, by the working of the Holy Spirit, could bring to the Jamaican people a measure of healing and spiritual renewal beyond what one could ask or think.”

Noel Erskine, Jamaica-born professor of theology and ethics at Candler School of Theology, Emory University in the United States, and Everton Jackson, executive secretary/treasurer of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, welcomed the JNT. Erskine praised the BSWI for undertaking the project, locating the decision to produce the JNT in the BSWI’s appreciation for the enculturation of the Gospel.

Timothy George, chair of the BWA Commission on Doctrine and Christian Unity and founding dean and president of the Beeson Seminary, Samford University in the US, described the session on the JNT as one of the best sessions he had organized during the 2010-2015 BWA quinquennium.

Copies of the JNT are available in print and audio formats through the following websites: www.biblesocietywi.org; www.Bible.is; www.youversion.com. The JNT should soon become available on multiple platforms through www.amazon.com.
Baptists in Jamaica put on a cultural and culinary display to welcome participants at the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering from July 1-6.

The more than 400 Baptists from 40 countries attending the conference, traveled to the Roaring River Great House to be treated to an authentic Jamaican experience, including local cuisine. Folk and contemporary music and dances were performed by the Baptist-owned William Knibb Memorial High School, the Bethel Baptist Church Steel Band and the Jamaica Youth Chorale.

Governor General Sir Patrick Allen welcomed the BWA delegation and commended Jamaican Baptists for their long history of commitment to freedom and nation building. He and head of government, Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, whose message was read by government minister Natalie Neita-Headley, noted that three of Jamaica’s seven National Heroes were Baptists.

Allen and Simpson Miller commended BWA General Secretary Neville Callam, a Jamaican, on his leadership of the international umbrella Baptist organization. Callam is the first person from the Caribbean to lead a Christian world communion.

Simpson Miller encouraged Baptists to continue their role in having an impact on the lives of Jamaicans, especially through education and moral influence.

The Bethel Baptist Church Steel Band performs at the welcome reception.

Other church and civic leaders were present at the welcoming event, including the president and general secretary of the Jamaica Council of Churches, Everald Galbraith and Gary Harriot, respectively; Anglican Lord Bishop of Jamaica Howard Gregory; Custos Rotulorum of St. Ann Radcliffe Walters; and Mayor of St. Ann’s Bay Desmond Gilmore.

The final stop was at the St. Ann’s Bay Baptist Church where the group gathered for a short prayer at the site where tradition holds that chains, shackles and other implements of slavery were buried the night slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1838. The burying of such objects occurred at several Baptist churches, including at the William Knibb Memorial Church.

Another group of 14 attendees at the Annual Gathering, which included Baptist World Aid Director Rothangliani Chhangte, visited a BWAid-funded project in the inner city community of Jones Town in Kingston.

“Farming inna di City” (Farming in the city) is an agricultural project of the Jones Town Baptist Church in association with the Jamaica Baptist Union Mission Agency, with collaboration from the Bethel Baptist Church Thrift Cooperative Society and the government’s Rural Agricultural Development Authority.

Its aim is to bring about urban renewal, food security, economic independence, educational development and to transform the lives of inner city residents through skills training and gainful employment. The project, which is in its second year, provides 12 people and their families with a source of income and food.

The group also went to the One Hundred Lane and Park Lane communities. Both communities, which adjoin each other, have a history of violent rivalry that has resulted in deaths, injuries and the burning of properties. Intervention by the JBU beginning in 2002 through monthly meetings, worship services, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, evangelism, health services, education, financial assistance and other forms of help, has led to the ending of the violence.

“It is our intention to continue these kinds of visits at future BWA Annual Gatherings where there are BWAid-supported projects,” Chhangte said. “It is an important way to identify with those who have been touched by Baptists around the world.”
Baptist Men Confab in Jamaica

Approximately 250 men from the Caribbean and around the world traveled to the Ocho Rios Baptist Church on July 2 for the Baptist World Alliance Men’s Confab, held to coincide with the BWA Annual Gathering.

“The church was filled with an electric atmosphere as new friendships were established and old acquaintances renewed their bonds of friendship,” Lucky Ray, president of American Baptist Men’s Ministry, said. “Men from all walks of life became as one body in Christ Jesus.”

The confab was a joint effort between the BWA Men’s Department, the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship (CBF) Men’s Department and the Jamaica Baptist Union Brotherhood.

Topics had a strong focus on encouraging men to faithfully rise up to the challenge as providers, protectors and priests. The theme, “Men of God on the Move,” drawn from Matthew 28:19-20, sought to encourage and strengthen the worldwide discipleship thrust of Baptist men.

Workshop topics included “Wholesomeness—a Society Designed by God” by Kiviyiekile Linyu, executive director of the Angami Baptist Church Council and president of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council in India; “The Man’s Role in the Family and Community” by Lucky Ray; “Christian Men in Business” by Glen Christian, founder and CEO of Cari-Med Limited in Jamaica; “The Challenge of Restoring Christian Values” by Forestal Lawton, immediate past president and current director of the BWA Men’s Department and president of the North American Baptist Men’s Fellowship; and “Understanding Males in a Changing World” by Ayoola Badejo, management consultant, president of the All Africa Baptist Men’s Department and secretary of the BWA Men’s Department.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam charged the men to rise up to the task at hand. He reminded the gathering that in the past, the BWA Men’s Department did great things for God, including the acquisition and distribution of 100,000 Bibles in Russia and another 1,000 Bibles in Liberia. There used to be a publication, the Baptist Men’s Manual. He declared that if the BWA Men’s Department were to regain its rightful place in the leadership of the BWA, undertakings such as these must be on the agenda.

The BWA leader expressed excitement about what he was witnessing. He assured the men of his continued support and noted recent improvements and signs of renewal in the BWA men’s movement. He offered a strong challenge to the men to be even more involved in their ministry and to prove their relevance.

Luke Shaw, president of the Jamaica Baptist Union, challenged men as individuals and as a Christian body, emphasizing that men must live out the beauty of an exemplary life. There should be consistency, the Jamaican Baptist head said. Men can’t be teaching one life and living another. People must see Christ in them, especially when they are facing difficult and trying circumstances.

Other participants at the confab were Everton Jackson, BWA regional secretary for the Caribbean and executive secretary/treasurer for the CBF; Owen Crooks, president of the BWA Men’s Department; David Serrant, chairman of the CBF Men’s Department; and Jonathan Hemmings, pastor of the Ocho Rios Baptist Church.

Five Leading Baptist figures were honored and memorialized during the Annual Gathering of the Baptist World Alliance in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. They were pioneer Baptist missionary George Liele, freedom fighter and anti-slavery leader Sam Sharpe, Baptist leader and educator Duke McCall, Black theologian J. Deotis Roberts and peace activist Glen Stassen, who received the 2013 Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award.

Following is a profile of each.

DUKE MCCALL
Instructive Model for Baptists

A session in honor of Duke McCall, president of the BWA from 1980-1985, was held, and a resolution passed by the General Council, commending McCall “as an instructive model for denominational service and leadership as a Baptist educator.”

During the session, BWA President John Upton spoke of his personal experience of McCall’s humility and kindness while he was a student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), where McCall was president from 1951-1982.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam also spoke about the insights he had gained into the character of McCall as he researched BWA literature. He spoke of the humanity of a man who conveyed deep self confidence that did nothing to conceal his own sense of personal vulnerability.

Bob Garrett, Piper Professor of Missions at Dallas Baptist University in the state of Texas in the United States, used a multi-media presentation to trace the life of McCall, beginning with his birth in Meridian, Mississippi, his upbringing in Memphis, Tennessee, through his schooling at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina.

The presentation moved on to McCall’s early days at SBTS where he earned a doctorate in Old Testament studies. Garrett also described McCall’s tenure as pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, his retirement, recent passing and his funeral service in Louisville.

McCall “was one of the towering figures of Baptist life . . . who contributed in multiple ways to his own religious body, the Southern Baptist Convention in
Baptist Figures Honored & Memorialized

the USA,” Garrett said. McCall registered “an astonishing chain of achievements in rapid succession” and “brokered important agreements with other denominational bodies.”

Garrett recalled McCall’s presidency of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and SBTS. McCall opened the doors of SBTS to African American and women students “in opposition to prevailing views.” Under McCall’s leadership, the SBTS facilitated the integration of black students when it was still illegal to do so under Kentucky law.

As head of the BWA McCall “has left a strong footprint” as “a global leader with an expansive vision of the role Baptists should play in the world,” said Garrett.

Garrett cited books by McCall, including *God’s Hurry*, which called for worldwide evangelistic outreach, and *Passport to the World*, written with W. A. Criswell after a globe-hopping trip at the behest of the BWA, appealing to various governments to allow American missionaries.

Present at the session was McCall’s son, attorney at law Duke McCall, Jr., who conveyed the thanks of the McCall family.

McCall died on April 2 this year. He was 98 years old.

**GLEN STASSEN**
Peace Activist

Glen Stassen, the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in California in the United States, was presented with the 2013 Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award during the Annual Gathering.

The award is given for significant and effective activities to secure, protect, restore or preserve human rights as stated in the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other declarations on human rights.

Stassen was recognized for his longtime role as a peace activist. He was lauded as the foremost proponent of the globally recognized just peacemaking theory in matters of war and conflict and was hailed as “arguably the leading Baptist peace theorist-activist of the twentieth century” whose “influence is felt well beyond the confines of the Baptist family.”

He was described as a fearless advocate who, for more than 50 years, engaged religious communities, civil society and governments in human rights, justice and peacemaking issues. He was involved in nonviolent campaigns for peace and human rights in countries such as the former East Germany, Kazakhstan and South Korea, and regions such as Central America, Eastern Europe and Southern Africa.

Declared as a tireless campaigner who participated in anti-nuclear campaigns across the world and negotiated the disarming and removal of short and middle range nuclear weapons from Europe, he led organizations such as the Strategy Committee of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign and the Arms Race and the International Conflict Committee of the Louisville Area Council on Peacemaking.

The BWA cited Stassen as an outstanding intellectual, a respected mentor and a committed Baptist Christian. He has led and held membership in a wide ranging number of academic, peacemaking, and denominational institutions and organizations, including the BWA where, over a number of decades, he has held membership on various commissions, including the Commission on Peace.

**J. DEOTIS ROBERTS**
Pioneer of Black Theology

The Baptist World Alliance held a session during its Annual Gathering on J. Deotis Roberts and passed a resolution in his honor. Roberts was lauded for his pioneering work as a seminary school professor, theologian, peacemaker, activist, and as a pioneer of Black Theology.

Roberts, who turns 86 in 2013, has taught at Howard Divinity School, Yale University, Duke University, and Eastern (now Palmer) Theological Seminary. He held the presidency of the American Theological Association and of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia. He was founder and president of the J. Deotis Roberts Research Library and Institute and of the Foundation for Religious and Educational Exchange.

Black theology took shape in the context of the Black Power movement in the United States in the 1960s. The Civil Rights Movement leadership organized its work around nonviolent civil disobedience and the passing of legislation. The slow pace of change, the violent opposition to equal rights for African Americans, and the temperament of younger African Americans combined to offer a formidable challenge to the style and substance of the Civil Rights movement.

Black Power proponents challenged the active and passive complicity of Anglo American and many African American churches that supported and strengthened racial discrimination. The critique and the significance of the Black Power movement demanded a response from the church. J. Deotis Roberts and James Cone were the seminal theologians offering critique and construction to help the church to be the body of Christ more faithfully in a racially segregated context.

At the session, Samuel Roberts, David Goatley and Noel Erskine offered various insights on the life and work of Roberts to bring to light glimpses of the depth and breadth of his work. Samuel Roberts, the Anne Borden and E. Hervey Evans Professor of Theology and Ethics offered a methodological analysis of the ethical contribution of Roberts. Goatley, executive secretary-treasurer of Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society and a protégé of Roberts, presented a theological methodological perspective of Roberts’ theology and its contemporary contribution toward breaking barriers and building communities across theological, cultural, and religious divides. Erskine, a protégé of James Cone, provided a critique of Roberts’ early theology of reconciliation.

(Continued on next page)
given the historical context along with an assessment of his contributions to the broader theological enterprise.

Each presenter addressed how Roberts’ commitment to liberation and reconciliation in his early theological constructions contributed to the life and witness of the academy and the church. The different perspectives of the presenters yielded robust discussion, varieties of interpretation, and invited thoughtful questions and conversation from the attendees.

GEORGE LIELE, Pioneer Baptist Missionary

Presenters at a forum on the work, mission and legacy of George Liele declared him the first Baptist missionary. Liele, a freed slave from the United States, planted the first Baptist church in Jamaica in 1783.

Noel Erskine, professor at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta in the United States, said that “with his migration to Jamaica in 1783, Liele became America’s first missionary, 33 years before Adoniram Judson sailed for Burma and 10 years before William Carey of England sailed for India.”

Liele, who was ordained in 1775, is also regarded as the first black person in the US to be ordained a Baptist pastor, and likely the first black Baptist pastor in the world. He planted churches in Savannah, Georgia.

His ministry in the US influenced others who went on to do significant Baptist work, including David George, baptized by Liele and who left Savannah for the Canadian Province of Nova Scotia and then later to Sierra Leone in Africa, where he started Baptist churches in both countries. Others included Jesse Peters in South Carolina, Hannah Williams in England and Andrew Bryan in Savannah.

Moses Baker, another freed slave from the US who was converted under Liele’s ministry in Jamaica, was instrumental in starting Baptist work in the western part of the island. Liele had concentrated his work in the capital Kingston and surrounding areas in the east.

According to Horace Russell, retired professor of historical theology at Palmer Theological Seminary near Philadelphia in the US, aspects of Liele’s model for ministry were adopted by the British missionaries who arrived in Jamaica early in the 19th century in response to appeals for assistance with the growing Baptist work on the island.

SAM SHARPE, Jamaican Revolutionary Hero

By Brian Kaylor

During the Annual Gathering of the Baptist World Alliance in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, Baptists from around the world learned about Sam Sharpe, a 19th Century Baptist deacon and preacher who played an influential role in ending slavery in Jamaica and other parts of the British Empire.

From touring historical sites to hearing presentations by Baptist scholars to listening to greetings from Jamaican governmental officials, Baptists learned about the man memorialized on the Jamaican 50 dollar bill.

In December of 1831, Sharpe led a strike for wages among enslaved persons in Jamaica. The movement, often called the “Baptist War” due to the leadership of Baptists like Sharpe, ended in May of 1832 with around 600 enslaved persons—including Sharpe—executed and hundreds of churches and church properties were destroyed. Many scholars, including the three who spoke during a BWA forum, believe the brutality in response to Sharpe’s movement sparked a backlash among the British public that resulted in the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.

Allusions to Sharpe also occurred during a welcome event hosted by the Jamaican Baptist Union. Comments from Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, read by Member of Parliament and the Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for Sport, Natalie Neita Headley, referenced Sharpe among Baptist National Heroes. Simpson Miller argued that “the principles which drove” Sharpe and other Baptists “into action back then remain as necessary today.” Jamaica Governor General Sir Patrick Allen also alluded to Sharpe during his remarks.

During the BWA forum, Roper focused much of his remarks on Sharpe’s nonviolent effort to challenge slavery.

“The most striking thing to me about Creole Sam Sharpe is that he stands out as a gentle man in a world of remarkably savagery,” Roper stated as he explained how remarkable it was that Sharpe did not start a violent revolt.

“Violence in response to violence as a methodology had exhausted itself,” Roper explained. “Violence produces more violence. It neither succeeded in overthrowing slavery nor in getting the enslaved to accept their lot.”

“The means we use must resemble the ends we seek—that is the real genius of Sharpe,” Roper posited.

With his nonviolent approach, Reid-Salmon argued Sharpe was a “post-figured Christ” as much as some old Testament figures were often “pre-figuring Christ.”

“What Moses was to his people is what Sharpe was to those who were in slavery in the British Empire,” Delroy Reid-Salmon, a Jamaican who now lives in the United States, explained during a BWA forum.

The forum on Sharpe, a joint roundtable of the commissions of the BWA Division of Freedom & Justice, included remarks

from three scholars: Reid-Salmon, Garnett Roper of Jamaica, and Paul Fiddes of the United Kingdom.

“Sam Sharpe is commonly regarded as a deacon, a preacher, a liberator, a national hero—these are roles that define him,” explained Reid-Salmon. “These roles, of course, followed by the term—I call a derogatory, dehumanizing term—a slave.”

Reid-Salmon quickly added, however, that Sharpe did not allow his enslavement to define him.

“Sharpe never regarded himself or his fellow “struggle men” as slaves or enslaved persons,” Reid-Salmon argued. “This condition did not define him. . . . The idea of freedom is what defined Sharpe.”

“Sharpe was free long before slavery was abolished,” Reid-Salmon insisted. “And the abolition of slavery did not free him. It was he that freed the slaves and the system of slavery.”

Sharpe’s nonviolent effort to challenge slavery.

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“His life and work bore witness to the liberated Christ through events that corresponded to Christ’s life,” Reid-
Theological Educators

Confront Change

By Tony Cartledge

Baptist educators involved in the training of future pastors and ministers face a variety of challenges as their institutions struggle to remain faithful, relevant and solvent.

Representatives from each of the six regions making up the Baptist World Alliance addressed the topic of “Emerging Issues in Theological Formation of Ministerial Students” during the eighth Baptist International Conference on Theological Education held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica.

Contextualization was a common theme, as educators have sought to help students integrate theory and praxis. Presenters Charlemagne Nditemeh of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship, Miyon Chung of the Asia Pacific Baptist Fellowship, Richard Serrano of the Union of Baptists of Latin America and Glenroy Lalor of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship all emphasized the diversity of students and ministerial contexts in their regions, requiring educators to help future ministers learn to “do theology” and practice within their various settings.

Nditemeh, from Cameroon, said this has been difficult in Africa, where most seminaries were established by Western missionaries and based on European or North American models, which aren’t always appropriate for the diverse African contexts. Chung, from South Korea, illustrated ways in which Western models aren’t always appropriate for Asian cultures. The Western approach is philosophical, theoretical, and analytical, she said, done within clearly defined nations that have experienced a common evolvement from premodernity to modernity and postmodernity.

In contrast, Asians are pragmatic and concrete, she said, and live in areas where national borders are not as important as tribal identity, and where premodernity, modernity, and postmodernity exist side by side.

Serrano noted the complexity of issues facing educators, including religious pluralism, distance, environmental issues, hostility and violence, poverty, and immigration, asking “How do we do theology in that context?”

Funding has also been a widespread problem. The global economic downturn has led to a drying up of overseas funding in Africa, said Nditemeh, requiring seminaries to find alternative support or to adapt their programs. Latin American Baptists have faced a similar issue since the 1990s, Serrano said, when the Southern Baptist Convention walked away from theological institutions they had established and funded for years.

Lina Andronoviene, who represented European Baptists, said many seminaries are struggling because the number of Christians and potential students in Europe has been in steady decline, and schools cannot afford to maintain residential campuses that were built in an earlier period when Christianity was more popular.

“Owning a building can feel like a grinding stone around one’s neck,” she said, but “God’s Spirit can show us different ways to go about things.”

Andronoviene said congregational-based ministerial training became popular in the 1990s, especially in the United Kingdom.

(Continued on next page)
Theological training in her home country of Lithuania – where there are less than 400 Baptists – takes place without a building or a budget, relying on volunteer teachers as well as students, she said.

Issues of both funding and contextualization have also led to an increase in distance learning, which can be done at a much lower cost than residential programs and tailored for individual contexts. Speakers noted, however, that face-to-face interaction remains crucial for ministerial formation.

To deal with this, some seminars are combining online courses with short-term residential programs. Others connect students with local pastors who provide personal attention and serve as a mentoring role. While past training has emphasized theory, current educators are giving more attention to practical aspects of ministry. Chung said foundations of biblical exegesis and theological construction remain necessary, but educators must widen the fields of specialization to train Christian counselors, educators, social workers, musicians, and others who can integrate theological astuteness with practical skills.

Lalor, of the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica, noted a growing inclination toward interdisciplinary studies, as students access university programs and engage other areas such as social sciences, mass communications, counseling, and other fields to prepare for more specialization in ministry.

Changes in the candidates who seek theological training were noted as well. Many are now older, second-career students. Lalor said the typical student at his school is no longer a single male in his mid-20s, but more likely to be married and in their late 30s. These students “bring a rich history of life experience” to the table, Lalor said, challenging educators to harness that wealth of experience.

Andronoviene, who teaches at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, confirmed Lalor’s assessment. She said European students are also more likely to be older and embarking on a second career. Several speakers noted an increase in the number of women studying theological education as well.

The shift in age is accompanied by a more ecumenical atmosphere in many countries, where it has become more acceptable for Baptists to study in non-Baptist institutions, and where Baptist schools are more likely to include students from other denominations.

Speakers agreed that preparing students to minister to a new generation of believers in a changing world is challenging. Andronoviene said Baptists in Eastern European countries learned during the Soviet era how to behave under persecution. But, she said, “It’s hard to find our way in a new world where people just don’t care.”

Even among those who are interested in spiritual matters, the framework of spiritual thinking has often changed. Meredith Stone, a PhD student at Brite Divinity School who represented the North American Baptist Fellowship, presented detailed research about subject areas that current educators and students consider to be important.

Stone said the most important thing she learned in the research “is that theological formation in North America is about the questions rather than the answers. This generation is not content to be taught someone else’s answers.”

Contemporary students want to be able to dialogue about the crucial questions of faith, how they arose, what others have thought, and what it means in a practical sense. “They live in the ‘gray, maybe middle’ and ministry will depend on their ability to dialogue about these issues,” she said.

Personal, theological, spiritual formation cannot be neglected, several speakers said. Chung cited a need for spiritual and moral formation of students, while Lalor emphasized that “theological education is not synonymous with ministerial formation.”

“Ministerial formation goes beyond theological education to include molding and instruction of students to embody what ministry is about,” Lalor said. It includes one’s vocational, personal, spiritual and theological identity, as well as character formation.

Stone said spiritual formation must promote the development of a holistic person who can be a true spiritual guide to believers, not just a church leader modeled on the corporate executive.

Andronoviene also noted the need to help students develop personal competence and character as they prepare to proclaim the gospel: “People are not persuaded by argument,” she said, “but by lifestyle and integrity.”

The Holy Spirit and Social Justice

The Spirit-filled life has profound implications for social justice and outreach, said Burchell Taylor, a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance and former president of the Caribbean Baptist fellowship.

Taylor, who spoke on the topic The Holy Spirit and Social Justice during the Baptist International Conference on Theological Education advocated for what he called “Spirit-empowered praxis,” a committed involvement in the world beyond the confines of the church. “The Spirit is deeply involved in the unfolding and outworking of God’s purpose in the world and the whole created order,” Taylor said. Therefore the Spirit’s witness is not limited or restricted to “the inner life of the church and its members.”

This understanding has profound implications. A Spirit-led movement will be keenly interested in working toward the healing of creation because “the Spirit is the life-giving, sustaining and transforming power of and within creation,” asserted Taylor.

A Spirit-led church exists as an alternative community in a world that “operates with a sense of its own self-sufficiency and self-serving ends.” The church, on the other hand, works “for the establishment of an order of justice, righteousness and peace in society and the entire world.” The church, even while being involved in the world, should take caution that it does not lose its distinctiveness and status as an alternative presence.

In order to be faithful to this Spirit-
empowered praxis, the church should train and prepare pastors and other church workers to be sensitive and discerning to the movement and work of the Spirit within their own context. “Spirit-empowered praxis demands that pastors and workers are prepared to relate to the concrete realities and particularities of the lived experience. Theological education, curriculum planning, course content and delivery must be mindful of this.”

The mission and ministry of the church should be contextualized, Taylor declared, especially in instances where social justice issues arise. There is the need, he said, to make sense of the circumstances of the people’s lived experience within their own socio-economic, political and cultural context. Theological and spiritual preparation of pastors and church workers is therefore of utmost importance. This, Taylor said, constitutes a challenge to the traditional way of doing theology. “There is a need for training which involves spiritual formation to be given to those who are called to give pastoral leadership and guidance to congregations, for participation in such a ministry and mission.”

In his response, Bill Tillman, director of Theological Education for the Baptist General Convention of Texas in the United States, said “finding resonance between the Spirit and social justice should not be a long search for Baptist Christians.” But he cautioned that “there is need to re-frame the conversation with every generation” to let them be aware that “the work of the Spirit [is] not only in and with an individual, but also in those matters which can be identified as even larger

and more influential than paradigms—the Creation, in fact.” Constant cultivation and education, he said, are needed.

Tillman agreed with Taylor that there is a need to emphasize “the total sphere of the Spirit’s presence, influence, and activity,” because “in the evolution of the de-emphasis of the Spirit has come a lack of appreciation of just how deep and wide the Spirit’s influence is and could be.”

In North America, the twin problems of a lack of sensitivity to the Spirit and “a strong anti-intellectual stream of thinking,” has led to “pastoral leadership [that] is found wanting in all kinds of areas, including that of assisting congregations in understanding the work of the Spirit.” Tillman asserted that in his context of North America, “ministerial education format, curriculum, pedagogies, and expectations are in great need of reformation.” There is the need “to assist students toward translating what they learn in seminary . . . into the language and lives of their constituents.”

The Spirit is deeply involved in the unfolding and outworking of God’s purpose in . . . the whole created order

Baptists, historically, are pre-occupied with Christology—doctrines concerning the nature and person of Christ—than with pneumatology—doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit.

According to William Brackney, professor of Christian thought and ethics at Acadia Divinity College and Acadia University in Canada, “Baptists have emphasized the preeminence of the person and work of Christ, and . . . have largely undervalued or overlooked the Third Person.” Even when Spirit language is used by Baptists, often the preference is for terms such as the “Spirit of Christ” or the “Spirit of holiness.”

Brackney was presenting his paper, Baptist Contributions to Theological Reflections on the Holy Spirit.

Making special reference to the United Kingdom and North America, Brackney asserted that Baptists “have been less creative and experimental in their development and articulation of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit” than other Christian groupings and traditions. Baptists, he claimed, “are timid in the experience of the Holy Spirit and reluctant to define carefully the Spirit’s person and role outside the historic creeds and Protestant/evangelical confessional statements.”

Despite this however, there have been notable formulations, statements, writings, and declarations on the Holy Spirit by Baptists, beginning with John Smyth, a Baptist pioneer in the 17th century. Brackney said that Smyth believed the true church to be that which “has been understood to be gathered by the Holy Spirit in Christ’s name. Such congregations are given spiritual gifts for ministry and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit.”


There was a flowering of “theological development among Baptists of the 18th century,” Brackney claimed. This includes copious writings of Englishmen John Gill, whose “treatment of the Holy Spirit grew out of his discussions of the Trinity”; and Andrew Fuller, who “offered an instrumental conceptualization of the Holy Spirit not only to his own community, but to hundreds of Baptists in North America who read his work with authority for generations.”

The 19th century saw increased interest in the work and ministry of the Spirit by Baptist Christians in the UK and North America. “The influence of revivalism, particularly in 19th century United Kingdom and North America, led to Baptist awareness of a need for an enlarged emphasis on the Spirit,” according to Brackney. Baptists also placed “much emphasis upon the work of the Holy Spirit in evangelism and missions.” Among the noted influencers and shapers at this time were Adoniram Judson Gordon, William Newton Clarke, H. Wheeler Robinson and

(Continued on next page)
Walter Rauschenbusch, the latter a key figure in the social gospel movement that flourished in the US during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

“Robinson’s contribution to the doctrine of the Spirit,” said Brackney, was “his view of the social dimensions of the work of the Spirit,” mirroring “the social gospel aspects of spirituality found in Walter Rauschenbush.”

Even though in the first half of the 20th century “nothing new on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit emerged among Baptists,” Baptists nevertheless “kept an eye on the growing constituencies of Holiness theology and Pentecostalism,” said Brackney, who, over many years, have sat on a number of committees and commissions of the BWA.

In addition to the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, conservatism, fundamentalism “and the Cessationist School of dispensationalist hermeneutics began to have a remarkable influence upon Baptist understanding of the Holy Spirit.” Cessationism holds the view that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues, prophetic utterances and faith healing, ceased being practiced early in Christian Church history. According to cessationists, the focus of the Christian life “is to seek the ‘higher’ or more desirable gifts of faith, love, gentleness, etc.”

But some Baptists in North America have been open to the manifestation of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, many influenced by Clark Pinnock, whose

The Holy Spirit
and Corporate Worship

Worship has always been at the center of Baptist life but “spiritual worship,” as described by Douglas Weaver, has always been understood and practiced differently by Baptists. Weaver was making a presentation at the Baptist International Conference on Theological Education in Jamaica.

Drawing mainly from 17th century sources in England and the United States, Weaver, professor of religion and director of undergraduate studies in the Department of Religion at Baylor University in Texas in the United States, stated that “early Baptist worship was both communal and individual.” The focus on individual faith, he said, was cast in the language of the Holy Spirit. “Early Baptists believed they were a Spirit-led people, and it was the Spirit which justified and emphasized the role of individuals and the communal nature of the church.”

This spirit-led worship was manifested in a number of ways. The first was the allowance given to individual expression in communal and personal worship, including the reading and interpretation of scripture for oneself, rather than relying on others to do so. Preaching was not restricted only to trained clergy, even allowing for prophesying by any individual led of the Spirit within the worship service “Baptists believed that authentic Spirit-led worship was free, voluntary and un-coerced; individual and communal conscience must both be unfettered before God.” A free conscience, Weaver asserted, “Was integral to authentic worship and tied to each believer’s relationship to God.”

Beginning in the 19th century, two movements that began outside of the Baptist faith helped to inform Baptists’ understanding of Spirit-led worship. The first was the Holiness movement that emerged out of, but was not restricted to, the Methodist tradition. Weaver indicated that though “it is difficult to determine the numerical strength of the Holiness Movement among Baptists in America,” nevertheless “the movement attracted some influential pastors and evangelists.”

The Holiness movement was a call to personal holiness and placed emphasis on “a second blessing” that ought to follow the conversion experience. This second blessing may be variously described as sanctification, holiness, a baptism of the Holy Spirit, entire consecration, the higher Christian life or perfect love, all brought on by a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

Thought Baptist denominations in the US and England resisted Pentecostalism, this new movement that began at the turn of the 20th century also influenced Baptist understanding and practice of Spirit-led worship. “Numerous Baptists were drawn to the explicit emphasis on the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts in Pentecostal worship,” Weaver claimed. Pentecostal worship was experiential and was “obviously compatible with most Baptist DNA.”

Weaver asserted that some of the early leaders of Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, were former Baptists. “Many early pioneers in African American groups, for example, Charles Mason of the Church of God in Christ, were former Baptists.”

The later Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic movement that began in the 1960s has also influenced Baptist understanding of the Holy Spirit role and place in worship. “Even among those Baptist communities that are against Pentecostal doctrine, Pentecostal practices have influenced worship.” These include such practices and phenomena as faith healing, miracles, prophecies, the use of multiple prayer languages, and the lifting of hands in prayer or during songs. “What is the most common is the adoption of contemporary praise worship,” which is now widespread and popular in many Baptist congregations. These, Christian rock and roll music, or praise choruses, Weaver said, “have their roots in Pentecostal-charismatic circles.”

Phyllis Rodgerson Pleasants Tessieri, in her response to Weaver’s paper, said “the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in corporate worship is one facet of the tension or dialectic in which Baptists live. Participatory Christianity is interactive. People are no longer content to be observers of religion. . . . A participatory Christian community will be one where everyone is recognized as a minister.”

Tessieri, a former professor of church
Pentecostal Controversies among Nigerian Baptists

Solomon Ademola Ishola of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary and former general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC), in his response to William Brackney’s paper at the Baptist International Conference on Theological Education, said Baptists in Nigeria struggled to come to terms with Pentecostal and Charismatic expressions and tendencies that were being manifested in Baptist congregations.

He said the 1900s witnessed a wave of “Pentecostal and Charismatic phenomenon and the movement made inroads into our churches.” Parachurch organizations and interdenominational groups such as Scripture Union, the Evangelical Christian Union and the Student Christian Movement, many of which emerged in Nigeria in the 1950s, drew heavily on Pentecostal and Charismatic expressions and doctrines of the Holy Spirit.

The 1970s, he said, “witnessed the full bloom of Pentecostal tendencies or practices among the young people,” including “the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the emphasis on speaking in tongues, healing and deliverance, simultaneous prayers during worship and holding prayer vigils.” These, Ishola declared, were considered by Baptist leaders at the time as “un-Baptistic practices. Such practices, as far as the leaders were concerned, was to be stamped out of the Baptist churches and in the gatherings of our young people.”

This led to long standing conflicts within Baptist churches, particularly between Baptist youth on the one hand, many of whom were students at tertiary institutions, and Nigerian Baptist leaders, pastors and missionaries on the other. “The response of the leaders of Nigerian Baptists at the time was outright condemnation and … combative against such manifestations of the Holy Spirit.” The head of the Baptist Students Fellowship (BSF), an American expatriate, was even deported from Nigeria in December 1977, accused of promoting Pentecostal practices and “subsequently regarded as a ‘security risk’ to the country.”

Her deportation, Ishola said, was shrouded in mystery and was done “without the knowledge of the Nigerian Baptist leaders.” Pointing to a similar occurrence in Ghana at the time, Ishola said the speculation “was that the American missionaries who were cessationists were responsible for her sudden exit.”

Ishola said “the reactions by some local Baptist pastors were swift as some banned the activities of the BSF and removed [BSF leaders and members] from leading Sunday schools, prayer meetings and choirs. Some churches even banned some student groups from using their church facilities for all their meetings.”

Pentecostalism was also affecting Baptist churches from another direction — indigenous African churches, which were “growing and spreading in Nigeria and [other] West African countries.” This, Ishola said, “contributed in no small measure to our leaders’ reactions to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit held by the Pentecostals.”

The deportation and the clampdown on Pentecostal influences in Baptist churches and among Baptist student and youth groups resulted in a mass exodus of young people from Baptist churches in Nigeria. Many of these youth joined “New Generation churches, while some started their own ministries and churches.” Ishola estimated that “close to 70 percent of the leadership of the New Generation churches in Nigeria are former Baptists who were either kicked out of their churches or simply left for where they could be utilized.”

The wrenching within the NBC led to much soul searching, especially after leadership of the convention fell into the hands of Nigerians, rather than American missionaries. In 1993, the NBC approved Statements of Faith and Practice of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, which included segments on the ministry and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the statement acknowledged, “Gives to Christians certain gifts for the equipping of the believers for ministry and the building up of the church of Jesus Christ. These gifts are varied and many.” Among the gifts, the statement affirmed, “Are wisdom, teaching, tongues, interpretation of tongues, administration, healing, miracles, evangelism, prophecy, stirring speech, giving, leadership and

(Continued on next page)
exhortation.” Yet it cautions “against the misuse of the gift of speaking in ecstatic utterance. It is not a forbidden gift, but must be interpreted and done decently and in order.”

Ishola regarded the affirmations as indicative of a change in attitude. “The statement was a departure from the silence of the denomination since the emergence of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Nigeria. The doctrinal expression was an admission of the presence of Pentecostal practices, but which must be handled biblically.”

The statement was followed by books written by Nigerian Baptist scholars and leaders examining the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit which, Ishola claimed, helped to change “the negative reactions of some older pastors to Charismatic or Pentecostal tendencies and practices.” Younger people, he said, have been allowed to participate in the life of the church. In 1999 the NBC adopted the theme, “Come, Holy Spirit,” at its annual convention meetings.

Ishola claimed that “the subject of the Holy Spirit has ceased to be a source of controversy among Nigerian Baptists and particularly in regard to manifestation. In cases where there is excess, the individuals or churches involved have been biblically-counseled.”

There is the need “to explore the nature of healing associated with the atonement in its broadest sense – liberation from sin, restoration of relationships, freedom from addictions, slavery [and] rejection of idolatries” as well as the restoration of “peace, freedom, and joy in the emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of our lives.”

Healing in the present age is contingent because “ultimate healing is in the Parousia, the second coming of Christ. For instance, while physical healing “is available to all through the atonement . . . it is not available to all in this present life. It is only guaranteed in the age to come,” Hill asserted.

This realization should lead to caution on the level of emphasis placed on physical healing as proof of genuine faith. Hill related the crisis of faith he endured in his younger years as a member within a Pentecostal church when, despite earnest prayers and expressions of faith in physical healing, persons for whom prayers were offered ended up dying. “Some Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have attempted to explicitly link physical healing with the atonement,” Hill observed. “This theology has been felt in Evangelical, Free Church, and mainline Protestant circles also, especially in the majority world and among churches with charismatic leanings.”

Greater emphasis, Hill concluded, should be placed on healing in the corporate and ethical life of the church, including in its public witness, service and its faithfulness in “pursuit of the healing mission of God.”

Otniel Bunaciu of the Faculty of Baptist Theology at the University of Bucharest in Romania, respondent to Hill’s presentation, acknowledged that “theological reflection on the work of the Holy Spirit has lagged behind the interest in the work of the Father and the Son. Therefore the Spirit’s role in atonement has not been generally explored as much.” However, he noted that “healing is seen by some as a pointer to God’s in-breaking Kingdom,” a demonstration that “Jesus has overthrown evil and believers are healed from sin or their alienation from God.”

God, Bunaciu asserted, acts in freedom. “God who is free is able to break free from the context that oppresses and determines us.” Whatever God does is a “free event.” Because God is free and acts in freedom, there is the need for persons to move away from a “static understanding of God that has dominated theology, influenced by Greek philosophy.” Bunaciu conceded that this approach to theology “is appealing because it is an understanding of a God who provides stability in an unstable world.” He said “we need to start our thinking from God’s perspective rather than our own.

**The Prosperity Gospel**

Problems

According to Deji Ayegboyin, president and chief executive officer of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the prosperity gospel has influenced a large number of Christians across a broad section of the Christian faith.

“It is obvious that prosperity teaching is a phenomenon that cuts across denominational barriers,” Ayegboyin said in his presentation at the 8th Baptist International Conference on Theological Education. “Prosperity teaching can be found in varying degrees in mainstream Protestant, Pentecostal as well as Charismatic Churches.”

Ayegboyin said “prosperity teaching had its roots in the United States [and] is now very popular in the South Atlantic, particularly in Africa.” He said many leaders within the prosperity gospel movement have their roots in evangelical churches and traditions, or were brought up under...
the influence of evangelical parachurch ministries.

The Nigerian Baptist leader was generally critical of the prosperity gospel movement, which he said has had widespread influence in Nigeria and other countries of Western Africa, such as Ghana. Many proponents, he said, have “moved away from key and fundamental tenets of the evangelical faith, including the authority and priority of the Bible as the Word of God, and the centrality of the cross of Christ.”

It is obvious, he claimed, “that the teachings of those who most vigorously promote the prosperity gospel can be spurious and unbiblical and that the impact on many churches is pastorally damaging and spiritually unhealthy.”

Ayeboyin insisted “it is unbiblical to teach that spiritual welfare can be measured only in terms of material welfare, or that wealth is always a sign of God’s blessing or that poverty or illness or early death, is always a sign of God’s curse, or human curses.”

He declared it dangerous “to conclude that success in life is entirely due to our own striving, or cleverness. Those elements of prosperity teaching that are virtually identical to ‘positive thinking’ and other kinds of ‘self-help’ techniques must be rejected.”

Ayeboyin bemoaned that too many persons have been duped by false expectations inherent in prosperity teaching, and when such expectations are not met, they give up on God or lose their faith. “It is rather unfortunate that in some cases prosperity teaching over-emphasizes individual wealth and success without the need for accountability.”

Otniel Bunaciu of the Faculty of Baptist Theology at the University of Bucharest in Romania, who responded to Ayeboyin, indicated that “linking atonement with healing and prosperity has become especially popular in the preaching and teaching of the so-called ‘prosperity Gospel.’” This, he said, is commonly associated with those of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians, but “the ideas are by no means limited only to those Christian movements.” Bunaciu said “the prosperity gospel suggests that when Christ dealt with sin through atonement, he also dealt with the consequences of sin like poverty, illness and death.”

One of the strongest criticisms against prosperity gospel claims and teachings, Bunaciu asserted, “comes from the fact that Jesus Christ himself was not rich and did not promote prosperity.” Jesus, he explained, “was born into a relatively poor family. Jesus did not have a stable home, he once had to perform a miracle in order to pay the temple tax, he had to place his mother’s care into that of one of his disciples just before his execution, and, in the Sermon on the Mount, he called the poor blessed.”

The annual Executive Board meeting of the BWA Women’s Department was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, from June 24-30. The Board welcomed three new vice presidents: Moreen Sharp, North America; Joina Dhlula, Africa; and Aniko Ujvari, Europe.

There were eight women from the Jamaica Baptist Women’s Federation that welcomed Board members to Jamaica. They gave the Board members an introduction to the Caribbean Island, and an orientation to what Baptist women are doing in Jamaica.

During the week the business of the Women’s Department was discussed and acted upon. One of the important decisions was the selection of the theme for the 2015 Baptist Women’s Leadership Conference, “Arise, Shine,” based on Isaiah 60:1. The conference will be in South Africa from July 18-21, 2015.

On Saturday, June 29, a women’s rally was held at Calvary Baptist Church in Montego Bay. It was a special time of worship, singing, testimonies by continental union presidents, and message by Raquel Contreras, president of the BWA Women’s Department. Before Contreras spoke, the children from Garland Hall, a ministry of the Jamaica Baptist Women’s Federation, sang.

A panel consisting of some members of the BWA delegation to the dialogues introduced the major sections of the report, focusing on key statements of agreement between Baptists and Catholics.

A dialogue session following these brief presentations provided opportunities for attendees to ask for clarification of terms and concepts in the report, express concerns about how aspects of the report might be received in their national contexts, and asked questions about the experience of the dialogue and the process by which the joint delegations produced the report.

One question inquired about the most surprising things the Baptist and Catholic delegations learned about one another. Baptists discovered that despite the official status of Catholic magisterial teaching, there is a wide diversity of Catholic thought reflected in debates that lead to the formulation of magisterial teaching, including many perspectives that converge with convictions more distinctive of the Baptist tradition. Catholics in turn discovered that members of the Baptist delegation were surprisingly well-versed in Catholic doctrine and liturgy in a way that was difficult for the Catholic delegation to mirror, especially given the diversity of Baptist faith and practice.

Another question concerned the manner and process by which the delegations to this and other international theological dialogues in which the BWA engages represent Baptist convictions. Responses emphasized that when the BWA engages in dialogues that aim at fuller expressions of the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17, it does so in keeping with Baptist polity. Neither the BWA nor any of its member unions can make decisions about matters of unity on behalf of local congregations, and the members of the delegations to dialogues speak for themselves as Baptists but in doing so seek to represent both the convictions held by most Baptists and the diversity that belongs to the Baptist tradition.

During each annual meeting of the dialogue with the Catholic Church, members of both delegations presented and discussed papers on focal themes that helped them go deep within their respective traditions to discover and find ways to articulate possibilities for consensus. Rather than negotiating compromises or creating new agreements, they worked to discern convergences that are already there in the two Christian world communions, yet have largely gone unrecognized by Baptists and Catholics. The resulting report is commended to Baptists and Catholics as a study document intended to stimulate reflection and further dialogue rather than as an official statement of either communion.

Panelists at the forum were Paul Fiddes, professor of Systematic Theology at Oxford University; Timothy George, dean of Samford University’s Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama; Steven Harmon, a professor at Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity in Boiling Springs, North Carolina; Curtis Freeman, research professor of Theology and director of the Baptist House of Studies at Duke University Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina; Elizabeth Newman, professor of Theology and Ethics at Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia; and Anthony Peck, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation.

A planning meeting for the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) international dialogue with the World Methodist Council (WMC) took place at the Wesley Chapel in London in the United Kingdom, from August 28-29.

The BWA Executive Committee and General Council, in March and July of this year, respectively, endorsed a proposal that the BWA begin the process of preparation for a theological dialogue with the WMC.

The dialogue is planned for 2014-2018 and will explore the theme, *Faith Active in Love: Sung and Preached, Confessed and Remembered, Lived and Learned.*

“Participation in bilateral dialogues is an expression of BWA’s commitment to continue the mission of God whose Messiah prayed for the unity of the church so that the world might believe” BWA General Secretary Neville Callam said, extrapolating from the Gospel according to John. “In asking how we might manifest
Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam said that the BWA faces four major challenges in its participation in international dialogues with other Christian traditions: different attitudes to ecumenism within the BWA family, the difficulty of having proper international representation on BWA dialogue teams, an indifferent attitude to the dialogues by some Baptists, and the lack of funding.

Callam, who was speaking at the 8th Baptist International Conference on Theological Education (BICTE), said there are three basic attitudes toward ecumenism among member organizations within the BWA. Some Baptist groups are indifferent or even hostile to the very notion of ecumenism, including holding dialogues with other Christian traditions. Others, while they are generally uninterested in ecumenism, may nevertheless be open to dialogue with groups they approve of. Then there are Baptists who believe that the ecumenical enterprise is an imperative and an obligation.

The lack of interest, commitment, or even hostility to ecumenism is one cause of the second problem – inadequate international representation. “The non-existence of a firm ecumenical commitment in some sections of the BWA community has negatively impacted the BWA’s capacity to identify truly representative international teams for the bilateral dialogues in which the organization participates,” Callam said.

Lack of funding also contributes to lopsided representation on BWA dialogue teams, with the overwhelming majority coming from the Global West and relatively few from the Global South. “Unless Baptist participation in theological dialogues is properly funded, we will not be able to secure credible representative international participation that is needed.”

Callam told the international gathering of Baptist leaders, theologians, teachers and pastors in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, that “to date, an average of 10.7 percent of BWA teams participating in international dialogues have come from the South.” Most participants come mainly from Europe, North America and Australia.

The problem of poor representation from the Global South is not unique to the BWA. Callam reported that “at the most recent Forum [on Bilateral Dialogues] held in Dar es Salaam in 2012, the view was expressed that the representation from the Global South in international dialogues teams was still inadequate.”

The BWA leader said “traditional sources of funding, where these once existed, are drying up. New sources need to be found.” For that to happen, “those who endow bilateral theological dialogue will need to be motivated by a concern for the unity of the church reflected in the prayer of Jesus in John 17.”

Callam stated that Baptists have not been as receptive of the dialogues as they could have been. Those that do are often involved in dialogues on the local level, such as Baptists in the United States, Norway, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Sweden, Germany and Australia. “More BWA member organizations need to take seriously the findings of international bilateral theological commissions – especially those in which BWA participates.”

He declared that reception does not necessarily involve full agreement. “Reception does not require unanimous consent to the agreements,” he said. “What it entails is taking seriously what has been agreed and appropriating; in the life of a church group, those insights that are found to be enriching.”

The BWA has so far participated in dialogues with five other Christian traditions: the World Alliance (now Communion) of Reformed Churches (1973-77); the Catholic Church (1984-88 and 2006-2010); the Lutheran World Federation (1986-1990); the Mennonite World Conference (1989-92); and the Anglican Communion (2000-2005).

The preparatory meeting agreed that the dialogue should aim at: a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, one another; mutual exchange of gifts for the enrichment and renewal of Baptist and Methodist churches; increased participation in a common mission and witness in the world; and deeper fellowship and cooperation by identifying and overcoming barriers. “We believe that we can move toward the fulfillment of these aims by focusing on the agreed theme,” Callam declared.

“Now that the focus of the dialogue has been identified, the international team to represent BWA will soon be appointed,” the BWA leader announced. The teams for the dialogue will comprise six persons from each of the two communions.

The BWA team for the planning meeting in London was Callam, Timothy George, chair of the BWA Commission on Doctrine and Christian Unity, Stephen Holmes and Curtis Freeman.
A BWA delegation visited the cities of Bogota, Cali and Buenaventura in Colombia from June 23-30, to observe the peace work of Protestant and evangelical churches in Colombia, and to explore ways to support this work.

The visit was a follow-up to a presentation by Pablo Moreno, Rector of Baptist University Foundation (UNIBAUTISTA) during a session of the BWA Commission on Peace in Santiago, Chile, in July 2012. In that meeting, Moreno described the ongoing violence and human rights abuses in Colombia. He spoke about peace initiatives, particularly through the Peace and Justice Commission of CEDECOL (Council of Evangelical Churches in Colombia), and the programs developed by UNIBAUTISTA to mitigate violence and promote peace. He emphasized that in their efforts to work for peace and justice, Colombian Christians need international support.

In Colombia, the BWA team had meetings with the Peace and Justice Commission of CEDECOL. The BWA learned of the commission’s role in human rights documentation and advocacy, where it seeks to document the impact of human rights violations on Protestant churches, communities, groups and individuals. The commission also runs a Peace Sanctuary Churches Program, where local congregations are encouraged to develop peace ministries in their communities. The Women’s Network helps women to develop networks of peace and related gender issues of conflict. The peace commission also inaugurated a training program, the Biblical Bases for Peace, a certificate program run by UNIBAUTISTA, based in Cali.

Buenaventura

Alan Marr, Chair of the BWA Commission on Peace, said Buenaventura “was like a photo that had been decolorized. The place looked sad and depressed.”

Church pastor Agapito told the BWA delegation that in 2007, two bombs exploded in front of his church, one a few minutes after the first. This is a common strategy used by guerrilla groups, he explained, exploding a smaller bomb to attract onlookers before unleashing a second, bigger bomb, killing many. Explosions like these are also timed to coincide with a major movement of drugs in another part of town, distracting police with the mayhem caused by the explosions.

Agapito also said two pastors were murdered within a few weeks of each other. Other pastors received threatening phone calls. Rocks were thrown into churches during the preaching of sermons. Churches are targets for extortion by gangs because it is believed they have money. Many pastors have had to move from place to place for security reasons.

The delegation learned that more than 95 percent of murders in Colombia are left without a person being brought to justice. Gangs who control the city are ruthless in their quest to control their turf and to take over the turf of other gangs. Many people are forced to move from the area.

Agapito said that on one single day 19 bombs exploded in Buenaventura. “Every time I leave my home I would say goodbye to my family.” He showed a DVD of the chaos following a bombing in 2007. Five were killed, including two police officers.

Lorenzo Bonilla, pastor of Community Baptist Church in Buenaventura, with whom the delegation was supposed to meet along with families who suffered from gang violence, informed the BWA team that the gangs told him the team was not welcome in the area. It was explained that permission must be sought from gangs for outsiders to visit their “territory.” After informing them of the BWA visit, Bonilla said he was told a resounding “no”.

Attempts to organize alternatives to the gangs have been greeted with violence. One pastor who worked with the police to get a youth group going was killed. Churches that discourage children and youth from joining an armed group have been “punished” by the gang. Many people have stopped going to church. Gang members are well known as they grew up in the town. “We know their families,” the BWA was told.

Drug Gangs and Violence

The fight against the drug cartels led to the decentralization of the drug trade. It was like hitting a hornet’s nest with a hammer, the BWA delegation was told. Smaller, more nimble groups took over. These groups are more flexible and mobile and are harder to track down. Buenaventura has become a center of violence because gangs are fighting a constant territorial war of control of the port. Because of this, basic human services such as education and healthcare are at a minimal standard. The gangs do not allow “outider” teachers and doctors to come into their “territory.”

When asked why he stayed despite opportunities to leave, Bonilla said, “Because the city needs us.”

The future for Buenaventura looks grim. It is the site of a strategic port for drug traffickers and armed groups are vying
for control. Unemployment is 75 percent, making poverty more severe. Many city residents see drug trafficking as a means to a living, especially in instances where there are large families, not uncommon in Buenaventura.

The BWA team met with a group of Baptist pastors in Buenaventura. Pastor Benedito said his congregants are suffering. One woman lost six members of her family in one day. Fourteen other members of her extended family have been killed. Benedito had had to flee for his life. At the time of the killing of the two pastors, he was chased by the killers and he had to go into hiding in Cali until it was safe to return.

Another pastor, Ermin, said violence in the town has increased over the past five years and that it was becoming more difficult to challenge gang members. In certain neighborhoods no outsider is allowed in. A third pastor, Alexander, claimed that he knew of three gang members who had become Christians through the ministry of his church.

Among the needs identified by the group of Baptist pastors were hunger and poverty relief, employment, income generation alternatives to the drug trade, places of refuge, education, therapy for trauma and the empowerment of city residents.

Pastor Ermin described a soccer competition in which gang members participated. It was described as a success in reaching out to gang members.

In Cali, the BWA team met with a group of mostly young people. The discussion revolved around the current peace process between the Colombian government and FARC, the main rebel group in Colombia. The group enumerated six areas of concern that the peace process need to address, agrarian and land reform, where some progress has already been made, broad based political participation, disarmament, drugs, victim rights and implementation.

Sessions were also held with leaders of the Colombian Baptist Denomination, who told the BWA team about a planned camp for children of pastors whose parents were killed in La Violencia.

Members of the BWA delegation were Raimundo Barreto, BWA director of Freedom and Justice; Alan Marr, chair of the BWA Commission on Peace; and William Mathis, a BWA peace commission member.

**BACKGROUND ON Conflict in Colombia**

More than 10 percent of Colombia’s population is displaced due to the ongoing civil war in the country, some 5.8 million people. The current conflict started in 1948 following the assassination of the Liberal Party’s presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala. The assassination of the populist presidential candidate was followed by massive riots, known as El Bogotazo, giving birth to La Violencia, a 10-year (1948–58) period of civil war in Colombia between the Colombian Conservative Party and the Colombian Liberal Party, which claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people.

The conflict also had religious overtones, since the conservatives, responsible for the massacre of Gaitan's liberal followers, and generally associated with the Catholic Church, also persecuted Protestant minorities, less than five percent of the population. Protestants were largely aligned with liberals, and were, among other things, accused by the conservatives of anticlericalism.

As a consequence of this conflict, many liberals escaped to rural zones. Militias were formed to fight the military. In the 1960s two groups were formed, FARC (originally Liberals who became Marxist Leninist) and ELN (also Marxist Leninist), created by academics and Catholic priests. Both groups grew in the 1960s-1980s. By the late 1990s FARC had 20,000 soldiers and ELN 12,000. Both were heavily funded by the Soviet bloc. This funding ran dry after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

Drugs, extortion and kidnapping became alternative sources of funding. Wealthy landowners were the primary victims of extortion. In response, these elites formed their own private armies. By the late 1990s, AUC (United Self Defense Forces of Colombia), formed by the elites, had 15,000 soldiers. They began to attack villagers because of the villages’ perceived association with FARC and ELN. The Colombian military later joined forces with right wing paramilitary groups.

The Patriotic Union (UP) was founded by the FARC and the Colombian Communist Party in 1985, as part of the peace negotiations that the guerrillas held with the Belisario Betancur Conservative government. UP was allegedly subject to political violence from drug lords, paramilitaries and rogue military agents during the mid-1980s, leading to its eventual decline and virtual disappearance. More than 4,000 supporters were murdered including two presidential candidates. FARC went back to fighting and engaging in the drug trade.

From 1999-2002 another peace process was attempted between FARC and Colombia President Andrés Pastrana Arango. A demilitarized zone was developed but it was unsuccessful. From 2002-2010, President Álvaro Uribe, whose father was killed by FARC, and who ran for election promising all out war against FARC, suspended all peace talks, taking a tough line against the guerrillas.

Uribe’s handpicked successor, Juan Manuel Santos, the incumbent president, surprised everyone and earned the ire of Uribe by negotiating with FARC, including agreeing to land reforms.

Since 1990, there have been 10,413 victims of the civil war, 60 percent military (6,420) and 40 percent civilians (3,993). Up to June this year, 118 military and 63 civilians were killed in 2013. Thirty one of 32 departments in Colombia are contaminated with landmines. Drug cartels use landmines to protect their territories. Guerrillas and paramilitary groups plant mines to protect cocaine plantations. In inner cities there are ammunitions such as grenades and missiles. Some are hidden in toys, cigarette boxes, etc.

Colombia is also one of the most economically unequal countries in the world. Sixty-seven percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Twenty million Colombians live on less than US$5 a day. Bonaventura, visited by the BWA delegation, is the most important port on the Pacific Coast. Seventy five percent of the 1.2 million people living on the Pacific Coast live below the poverty line.

Colombia has the third highest African-descended population in the Americas, after the United States and Brazil. A significant majority of the Colombian/African population is in the Pacific region and is mostly poor. In the nine civil wars between Liberals and Conservatives, the poor have been caught in the crossfire.
The Baptist World Alliance hosted a Karen delegation at its international offices in August to discuss issues related to conflicts and displaced persons in and outside of Myanmar. The Karen are one of several ethnic groups in armed conflict with the Myanmar government since 1949, making it one of the longest ongoing armed struggles in the world.

There are an estimated 130,000 to 150,000 Karen and Karenni (a subgroup of the Karen people) refugees in nine refugee camps in Thailand.

In January 2012, a ceasefire agreement was signed between the Karen National Union, the political wing of the Karen resistance, and the Myanmar government. Since then, there has been a push for the repatriation of Karen and Karenni living in refugee camps in Thailand.

The delegation visiting the BWA expressed strong reservations about government plans for repatriation. Many landmines are still in the areas where repatriation would take place and these mines need to be cleared.

There is fear that those repatriated would be living in camps set up by the government. There are an estimated 300,000 internally displaced Karen and Karenni in eastern Myanmar, many living in camps built by the government. The fear is that those repatriated will end up in similar camps. There is no point, in the view of the Karen delegation, for refugees to swap living in one camp for another where it is suspected they would be under the strong control and close scrutiny of the government.

The government has not made a commitment to return lands confiscated from the Karen. Reports are that about 3,000 Karen villages have been destroyed by the Myanmar military. Even during the peace talks the government expanded its control of Karen territory, taking even more Karen lands. Much of the Karen lands are rich in minerals such as gems and timber, including teak. It is suspected that these form part of the reason for government repression against the Karen and the appropriation of their land.

The delegation also raised the issue of lands confiscated from Karen churches and church organizations, such as church compounds and schools, during the 1962 militarization of the country. Some 30 percent to 40 percent of the Karen people are Baptists. The Karen Baptist Convention wants the return of these properties.

Many Karen refugees and other displaced persons are still traumatized by their experiences at the hands of the Myanmar military that led them to flee their homes. Too many are not yet ready to see the faces of those who executed or tortured their loved ones.

The Myanmar government is still fighting with the Kachin, another ethnic group also in armed conflict with the government. It is difficult to accept at face value the government offer of peace when it is still fighting the Kachin. There is the need for a nationwide ceasefire, the delegation stated. Many Kachin, like the Karen, are Baptists.

There is great mistrust of the Myanmar government’s real intentions and motives. The Karen have not been included in discussions or decisions on repatriation. Cross border organizations (CBOs) such as the Karen Women’s Organization and refugee representative groups such as the Karen Refugee Committee have been excluded, not just by the governments of Myanmar and Thailand, but also by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. There is need for the Karen to be part of the conversation about their future, the delegation insisted.

The pressure for repatriation from all quarters is being intensified, the BWA was told. Rations given to refugees are being drastically reduced. Monthly rations for rice decreased from 16 kilograms per person to 12 kilograms per person. Rumors are that next year there will be further reductions to 10 kilograms per person. The pressure to return to Myanmar comes not just from the government of Thailand but also from international nongovernment organizations, which decreased their aid to refugees in Thailand while opening offices in Myanmar where they are placing more resources.

There is fear that many of the things needed to enable refugees to resettle would not be in place, such as a police force, lawyers, healthcare workers, hospitals, health clinics, schools and teachers.

One week after the meetings were held, the BWA fulfilled a request to assist the delegation to meet with various groups at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. Darrell Armstrong, BWA representative at the UN, helped the delegation to meet with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN missions for Japan and Sweden.

The BWA, through the divisions of Freedom and Justice and Baptist World Aid, offered future support where possible.

As the Syria crisis intensifies, an average of 8,000 people are estimated to cross the Syrian borders daily to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. On July 15 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported the presence of more than 1,778,000 registered Syrian refugees, out of which more than 610,000 are in Lebanon, a country with a total population of slightly over four million Lebanese, but with the largest concentration of unregistered Syrian refugees whose numbers are not included in the aforementioned figures.

The Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development (LSESD) humanitarian response to the Syria crisis that started in the summer of 2011 continues in partnership with local churches and...
Saw Simon was the recipient of the Baptist World Alliance Human Rights Award in the year 2000. He is founder and principal of the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College in the Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand, home to some 50,000 mainly Karen refugees from Myanmar (Burma). The following is an interview of Simon conducted by Baptist World Aid Director Rothangliani Chhangte on her visit to the Mae La camp in July, on plans by the Myanmar and Thai governments to repatriate Karen refugees back to Myanmar.

**The Karen people** are not economic or disaster refugees but refugees because of the civil war in Burma that has its beginnings in 1949, the year I was born. Thus the conflict between the Karen and the Burmese military is as old as I am,” began Rev. Simon, when I asked him about his thoughts on the peace process and the repatriation of the 140,000 Karen and Karenni refugees living along the Thai-Myanmar border.

Rev. Simon is rather wary about the peace talks and the peace process. He said the Myanmar government’s tactic is to sign a ceasefire with one ethnic group when it wants to fight another ethnic group. It has done that in the past when it signed a peace treaty with the Kachins and the Chins while it fought the Karen people. Now that the government is back fighting the Kachins, it has started peace talks with the Karen National Union (KNU) the armed insurgency group that has been fighting for the freedom of the Karen people, the right for self-determination and the freedom to practice their own culture, language and religion.

Rev. Simon is also wary about the real intention of the government and the military. “If the government is serious about peace, why has the military reinforced its bases with ammunition and military hardware in the Karen state?” he asked. “If the government really wants peace why is it building new bases and barracks since the talks started?” The military is not involved in the peace talks and so he is not sure if current negotiations carry any weight if they are not part of the negotiations. He is also not sure who is in control of the country, whether it is the president of Myanmar or the head of the army. The army generals seem to do their own thing, even against the president and the parliament’s wishes.

In Myanmar, many internally displaced Karens are forced to live in government/army built quarters closely monitored by the army, that were built to house refugees who return. He said the Karen people do not want to return if they are not able to go back to the homes and farms they left behind. One of the conditions for their return is that they be allowed to go back to their villages and repossess their land and property.

He has heard that the government has been confiscating and grabbing land for development, displacing thousands of people. “The Karen people have to be able to determine their own future and what development they want to see on their land,” he said. He fears that the government is making business deals with many countries including the United States. These business negotiations do not take into account the best interests of the Karen people. He stressed that the self-determination of the Karen people is crucial and that any peace treaty that does not include this will not be accepted by the people.

**Syrian Refugees in Lebanon**

Community-based organizations, and includes the provision of food and nonfood items to 2,475 refugee households in Lebanon, and more than 1,650 internally displaced families in Syria.

In parallel, our children and youth ministry is organizing activities for the children in Zahle’ (the Bekaa region, around 15 minutes’ drive from the Syrian border) where we have the largest concentration of families, and where we are now developing a pilot “school” and income generation project for the education of Syrian children, using the Syrian curriculum taught by teachers who are themselves Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

The families LSESD serve wrestle with many challenges, including the effects of traumatic experiences that they’ve been through.

“Our journey from home was a rough 11 hours ride by bus. Along with our young daughters, we put on long gowns and veils to avoid the unwanted attention of armed men controlling the unofficial checkpoints on our way to Lebanon. The risk was no less for our husbands, yet thank God we made it safely”, said Samia, a Syrian woman in her early thirties who had just arrived a week earlier with her husband, children and other relatives.

Still weary from their journey to safety, they spoke of the “shooting, bombing, kidnapping …” that led them to the difficult decision to leave their homeland. Their 12 year old daughter, Houda, who had been silently observing her surroundings suddenly turned to us and started recounting, in an expressionless face and voice, story after story of atrocities that took place in their neighborhood at the hands of strangers, ending with news of the kidnapping of her classmate a few days earlier. “Our country is no longer the same. It is no longer safe for our women and children to go out,” commented her father. “It is for their safety that we left.”

This family, along with another that arrived with them, are currently staying in the home of a Syrian relative who is married to a Lebanese. “I don’t know how long we can impose on our hosts. As you can see, they themselves live in a very small apartment. We need to find work so we can afford to move to another place. We also need to be thinking of our children. They already lost...”

(Continued on next page)

This book is a very valuable resource provided by scholars who understand the significant contribution of George Liele, the African American Baptist pastor who pioneered Baptist work in Jamaica before William Carey ministered in India. Readers will find lucid characterizations of the contemporary world in which Liele served and the context in which Liele ministered in the US.

At the recent BWA Gathering in Ocho Rios, members of the historic Friendship Baptist Church, in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, presented complimentary copies of *George Liele’s Life and Legacy* to ministers of the Jamaica Baptist Union. Interim pastor of this mission-minded church is Emanuel McCall, a former BWA vice president.

Alfred B. Johnson, *Ambassador to the Global Village*

Bernard M. Spooner, General Editor, *Handbook for Baptists*

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**CIRCULATION STATEMENT**

Statement required by the act of August 12, 1970, section 3685, Title 39, United States Code, showing ownership, management and circulation of BAPTIST WORLD. Published four times per year at 405 N. Washington Street, Falls Church, Fairfax County, Virginia 22046; the Publisher is Baptist World Alliance; the Editor is Eron Henry. There are no bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities. Baptist World Alliance is a nonprofit organization located at the above address. The purpose, function and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes has not changed during the preceding 12 months.

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Eron Henry, Editor

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**Syrian Refugees Continues**

the current school year…” When asked how we can pray for them, together, they said: “Pray for peace for Syria that we may be able to go back.”

the LSESD team prayed with them and left, heading for another refugee family that lives a few minutes away, in a rundown garage. “When the fighting intensified, we left our village for a couple of days hoping to return once things calm down. Yet, when we tried to go back, we were not allowed to enter our village again. We moved from one place to the other seeking work, yet could not find any. Eventually, my husband and I decided to come to Lebanon where it is safer for our two kids. It’s already been five months or so since we came. Our children still jump with fright at the slamming of a door, or the sound of a car or truck. But at least they now sleep at night, Sana stated. “Moreover, both my children now go to Sunday school and they’re happy there. Look at their drawings”, she said, pointing to four brightly-colored drawings that are scotch-taped unto the dark wall of the dimly lit one-room garage they now call home.

For some, it was the death of their loved ones that led them to give up and leave. Others went through near-death experiences that led them to flee. Najat is a young woman in her mid-twenties who was shot by a sniper on her way home to her husband and child. “We knew that our neighborhood was not safe but we had nowhere to go and so had learned to maneuver our way in between the alleys. But this time the sniper got me as I neared our building. I felt the heat in my leg and I knew that if I as much as slowed down the next bullet will be aimed at my head. I ran as if my life depended on it, because it did. Once I made it to our apartment, I leaned on the door and all I could think of was that I needed to lie down. I did not immediately tell my husband, knowing that the sniper may still be out there ready for the next victim.”

Najat’s family was only able to leave for the hospital several hours later when their friend parked his van directly at the entrance of their building, blocking the view of the sniper so they could literally jump in while the bullets whizzed over their heads. Still limping from her injury, Najat spoke of how their lives changed drastically since then. “My husband had a small furniture workshop in the same building where we lived. Yet, we realized the day I got shot that it would be crazy to go back to our neighborhood again. Sadly, we left behind our home and our source of income, and moved from one shelter to the other, displaced within our own country. Neither my husband nor I could find work. And so to survive, we decided to come to Lebanon. Perhaps we stand a better chance here. But here we are today, still jobless, and still moving from one shelter to the next. The only difference is that we’re now refugees in Lebanon. We’re not used to this! Will this nightmare ever come to an end?!”

Jamila, a 33-year old mother who shares a tent with her husband and 16 children, the eldest a teenager, voiced a growing concern that many refugee families in Lebanon today share. “We sought refuge in Lebanon from the violence in Syria. Yet, today we live in fear of what will become of us should something bad happen here! What do we do then?”

Their pain and anxiety are deep. As Lebanese, we’ve been there before and we know that what Syrians need most today is a sense of hope. LSESD are constantly encouraged to share the reason for our hope when we hear such statements as “you stood by us in our hour of need… tell us why!”

*N.B. The names of the people in this article have been changed for their safety.*

Alia Abboud is director of Development & Partner Relations at the Lebanese Society for Educational & Social Development in Lebanon.
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) has granted an additional sum of US$20,000 for Syrian relief, following on other grants in 2012 and earlier this year.

The funds will be used specifically for the humanitarian crisis in Homs, one of the hardest hit areas in the ongoing Syrian civil war and an epicenter of the revolutionary movement in the Middle Eastern country. Homs has seen some of the largest casualties and destruction since protests began in Syria in March 2011.

A goal of the project is to provide monthly food and medical support to 150 Syrian families over a four-month period that will enable the families affected by the crisis to meet basic human needs and cope with displacement, violence and the deteriorating economic conditions.

The BWA partner in the relief effort reported that “the humanitarian situation has continuously deteriorated. The civilian population is suffering from the impact of armed violence, human rights violations and increasing lack of access to food, water and medical assistance.”

The group stated that “mass displacement continues across Syria” and cited a United Nations report asserting that by the end of 2013, “half the population of Syria will be in need of aid.” It is estimated that by the end of this year, some 3.45 million Syrians will be refugees in other countries and another 6.8 million displaced inside Syria.

“Fear and lack of security is dominating in daily life. Kidnapping, car bombs, suicide bombs, shelling and bombardment have had terrible psychological, economic and social implications,” the BWA partner declared. There has been “significant damage to structures and infrastructure.”

In a resolution passed by the BWA General Council in July of this year, the BWA called on governments to “support the efforts of those who are working toward a negotiated peace [in Syria] and provide essential humanitarian resources to assist refugees in this situation of conflict.”

A second resolution passed by the General Council encouraged Baptists “to act as advocates for displaced persons and to develop plans to respond with compassion and hospitality to the needs of displaced persons.”

Donations to BWA Syrian Relief

may be made online at: www.bwanet.org/give

or sent to:
Baptist World Aid
c/o Baptist World Alliance
405 North Washington Street
Falls Church, VA 22046
USA

Medical teams and teaching volunteers may write to: bwaid@bwanet.org.

A section of Aleppo bombed during the Syrian civil war

BWA DIRECTOR Visits Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon

As the world community prepared to mark World Refugee Day on June 20, the Baptist World Alliance® focused on the plight of Syrians who have been displaced by the civil war that began in the Middle Eastern country in 2011.

The death toll from the civil war is estimated at more than 100,000. The United Nations estimates that the number of Syrian refugees has exceeded 1.4 million with the majority in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt. More than four million are believed to be displaced inside Syria.

Rothangliani Chhangte, director of Baptist World Aid (BW Aid), the relief and development arm of the BWA, traveled to Jordan and Lebanon in June to visit refugee camps and to observe work being done by Baptists and other local partners in the region to assist Syrian refugees in those countries.

The plight of the refugees, she said, is desperate. “In Lebanon, Syrian refugees already make up one fifth of the population. This is causing a tremendous strain on the local communities that are hosting the refugees,” Chhangte said. “The lack of housing has already driven up the price of rent in the country, making it difficult even for local Lebanese to pay for rent.”

In Jordan, “there are so many families who are in need who do not get any aid assistance and Jordanians worry about the long term effects this will have in their country.” She reported that BW Aid partners target those refugees who are not registered and have not received aid from the UN or other aid agencies.

Refugees face myriad problems. These include lack of security, poverty, inflationary prices, overcrowding and lack of proper housing, insanitary conditions, chronic diseases and children missing out on school.

Chhangte indicated that perhaps the most difficult problem that Syrian refugees face is the sense of a loss of dignity. “While they are grateful for the aid they receive and the safety they feel in Jordan and Lebanon, they also expressed a feeling of a loss of dignity, by being forced to accept handouts from other people.” The hope, she said, is that BW Aid, working with partners in Jordan and Lebanon, “will be able to help them get their dignity back with our generosity so they need not have to beg for food and assistance.”

Chhangte is appealing to the international Baptist community for assistance. “At the moment the best way to help is to send money.”

She also said “they want our advocacy and they also want our prayers. They would also welcome international medical teams to help out in their clinics by providing free medical check-ups for refugees.” There are also requests for English language teachers in Lebanon and volunteers who can work with children in both Jordan and Lebanon.
Charlotte Lovelace Hoover

Charlotte Lovelace Hoover, a major donor and friend of the Baptist World Alliance, died on July 1, at the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire, in the United States. She was 94 years old.

Hoover supported many causes of the BWA including contributions to disaster and hunger relief. She was a major contributor to the purchase of the BWA international offices in 2001. She and her husband Lawrence, who died in 1983, were benefactors for other Baptist causes and institutions, including theological seminaries.

Funeral services were held at Precision Valley Baptist Church in North Springfield, Vermont, on July 9.

She leaves son, Arthur Hoover, and daughter, Sandra Mollica.

Peter Eidberg

Peter Eidberg, past president of the Baptist Union of Norway, former dean of the Norwegian Baptist Theological Seminary and founder of the Norwegian Baptist Historical Union, died on August 12. He was 79 years old.

Eidberg was regarded as the foremost Norwegian Baptist historian. His doctoral thesis covered the growth and spread of the Baptist movement in Norway until the Jubilee conference in 1902. His eventual focus was on recent Norwegian church history, American church history and Baptist history specifically.

He founded the Norwegian Baptist Historical Union in 1978 and was its leader throughout the remainder of his life. In 1994 Eidberg started and was editor of Baptist – a Magazine for Baptist History, Theology and Praxis, published by the Norwegian Baptist Historical Union. From 2001-2009 he was an editor of European Dictionary of Baptist Life and Thought.

He taught at the Norwegian Baptist Theological Seminary for 42 years and served as dean for 11 of those years.

Eidberg was, amongst other things, a board member of the Norwegian Counsel of Free Churches, the Christian Broadcasting Union, the Prayer Week for Christian Unity and the Nordic Ecumenical Counsel. He was also a member of Norwegian Forum for Theological Dialogue and a board member for Modum Bad.

Eidberg was awarded the Ecumenical Prize in 2006 for his contribution to the ecumenical movement in Norway. In 2010 he was honored by Norway’s’ king with the medal for long and faithful service.

He was, from 1980-1990, a member of the Baptist World Alliance General Council. From 1980 to 1995 he served, at various times, as a member of the BWA Study and Research Executive Committee, the Communications Committee, the Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity, the Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation and the Academic and Theological Education Work Group.

Funeral services were held at the Bærum Baptist Church on August 21.

He leaves wife, Palma, and three children.

Joseph Sedu Mans

Joseph Sedu Mans, a past vice president of the Baptist World Alliance and former president of the Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone, died on June 29, in Lunsar, Sierra Leone. He was 95 years old.

Mans was the founding father of the Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone and provided leadership to the wider evangelical and ecumenical communities in the West African country. He served as the first executive president of the Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone from 1974-1991 and was named president emeritus for his meritorious service to the convention.

Mans was born to Muslim parents in the French colony of what is now the Republic of Guinea. His father, an accomplished Islamic scholar, moved the family to Sierra Leone. After his father’s death, he attended a school run by Christian missionaries and converted to Christianity. Having received a call to the ordained Christian ministry, he studied and trained at the Gbendembu Wesleyan Theological Seminary between 1943 and 1947 and, several years later, at Houghton College in New York in the United States, from 1960-1964.

He was pastor of the Kamakwie Wesleyan Church between 1948 and 1955 and of the Makeni Wesleyan Church from 1955-1970. He served as vice president of the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone from 1960-1965.

He was a founder of the Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone, serving as its president from 1975-1978, was president of the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, and was a member of the Sierra Leone Bible College Board from 1978-1998. In 1971, the World Council of Churches named him as one of six commission members to assess the impact of the WCC relief program for Bangladesh refugees in Calcutta, India.

In 1972, Mans was tapped to lead Baptist work in Sierra Leone and became the first president of the newly formed Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone in 1974. Mans served the BWA in a number of capacities. In addition to being BWA vice president from 1990-1995, he was a member of the General Council, the Executive Committee, the Officers Search Committee, the Resolutions Committee and the Congress Program Committee.

Mans was involved in the civic life of his country. Between 1944 and 1948 he was teacher and later head teacher of the Gbendembu Wesleyan Primary School. He was the founder and principal of the Birch Memorial Secondary School Makeni from 1968-1970. In 1966 he was commissioned by the minister of education to examine, along with other commissioners, the status of the Local Education Authority and make recommendations.

He was instrumental in the establishment and development of the Lunsar Baptist Eye Hospital and was involved, together with his wife, Susan Sadi Hassanyeh, in the construction of the Freetown Youth Centre. He chaired the Bombali District Red Cross Society from 1965-1970 and was executive secretary of the New Life for All Movement from 1970-1974. He served as a member of the Makeni Town Council and the Bombali District Council.

In recognition for his contribution to the country’s development and for his philanthropic service, he was named as a member of the order of the Rokel by the president of Sierra Leone.

Funeral services were held July 21 at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Lunsar. Mourners included Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma and Opposition Leader John Benjamin. He leaves son, Joseph Jr., and daughters, Linda and Elizabeth.
A Personal Reflection

on the Baptist Youth World Conference in Singapore

The Baptist Youth World Conference held in Singapore was a five star moment. Not only were the facilities five star but so were the worship, the focus and family groups, music, and speakers. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the BWA staff, the Local Arrangements Committee, Singapore Baptists, and the planning committee of the Youth Department. Their hard work created the perfect environment for the Spirit of God to come and fill the hearts of those present. Who will ever forget the physical movement of the floor as the youth celebrated in worship? The 2013 Baptist Youth World Conference will remain one of those special highlights of this quinquennium for me.

Our general secretary, Neville Callam, and I were talking after the conference and he wondered aloud what it was that those who attended the conference carried home with them. While I thought about what the youth might have taken away it occurred to me to ask myself what I had experienced and what I had taken away. Let me share one of my “take-aways.”

It occurred to me that most of God’s new movements begin as youth led movements. This is true worldwide. Jesus began his ministry at the very early age of 30 and changed the course of spiritual history. How would one at such a young age choose to start such a movement? He might have blown us away with radical new teachings in a public square of some kind. He might have taken his place among the homeless, become one of them, and we would hear about how this visitor was astounding them with radical changes for the sick and infirmed. Who would have expected that he would begin his mission by coming to essentially a youthful event, a wedding, and saving the reception while all family and youthful friends were dancing and making the floor vibrate.

John’s Gospel says that is how it started. It was a kind of wedding reception. If this were a typical wedding of that time, it would have lasted seven days and nights; a wedding was a happy echo of the seven days of creation. So, for a week they answered by laughing, drinking, eating, making music, dancing those great whirling Jewish dances, holding lifted hands moving in and out and round and round. You must picture Jesus dancing like that. He would have been very at home at the youth conference in Singapore.

Look at him, celebrating life. Why do we make him so pale and so grim about what is wrong with us when he is also so engaged with human joy, creativity and vitality? I am very grateful that Jesus did not come clean in the end is about participating in God’s lavish joy. Jesus wasn’t just saving a reception. He was lavishing on them and on us the sense of God’s joy among us and God’s presence in Christ is just like that. It is potent, rousing, strong, antiseptic, dangerous, requires discipline, stirs passion, imparts courage, lowers barriers, makes friends, infuses us to go and infuse the world with how much joy there is here.

It is important to remember it doesn’t always come in party clothes. There will be a night when Jesus will tell his disciples that the wine they drink will be his blood poured out for them for the forgiveness of sin, but the gift is never about easiness. It is about joy. Who would have thought that people like us would be so afraid of God’s joy? Have our lives been so long, so dull, so disappointing? Thank goodness God has placed the youth among us and Christ is among them. He will have us pause in the work of the mission long enough that through them he can give us strong, wonderful surprises. Surprises like the fresh vision of our young people who really do believe God’s will can be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

At the Baptist Youth World Conference in Singapore I was invited as a guest to come and drink of the new life the Spirit of God offered and to participate in a great joy. Thank you.

We do like to make sure that cleansing is emphasized. But this young man does something more. What was water when dipped became something warm, pungent, velvety, and dark red. A 17th Century poet wrote, “The conscious water saw its God and blushed.”

Why was that necessary? Jesus knew that being made clean in the end is about participating in God’s joy. Jesus wasn’t just saving a reception. He was lavishing on them and on us the sense of God’s joy among us and God’s presence in Christ is just like that. It is potent, rousing, strong, antiseptic, dangerous, requires discipline, stirs passion, imparts courage.

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March on Washington—"Sow" What?

By Karen Curry

Fifty years ago, thousands converged on the National Mall in Washington, DC, to raise a collective voice against racial violence and to fearlessly demand jobs and justice for all Americans. Fifty years ago, when my mother boldly took a day off from work to join the march, I was not even a glimmer in her eye. Now, 50 years later, my mother and I stood proudly together on the National Mall along with my husband and children, representing three generations of an African-American family living out much of what Martin Luther King, Jr. and others only dreamed about.

Then and now, a question loomed in the back of some minds regarding the March on Washington, “So what? Why march?”

To really understand why people march, participate in one—the purpose quickly becomes self-evident.

Marching for a common cause creates an energy, a synergy, a unity and an unparalleled ability to affect change. Marching together in the nation’s capital sends a message to all of the United States and to all the world that the causes being marched for are expansive in their impact and too weighty or egregious to be ignored. Most importantly, the common causes that were espoused in the original and the commemorative marches on Washington were exactly what God calls us to vociferously defend:

“Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy.” (Psalm 82:3)

“Put away violence and oppression, and execute justice and righteousness.” (Ezekiel 45:8-9)

“… neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 22:21)

“…Neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger.” (Leviticus 19:10)

“… let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:18)

Note, these are not calls for sympathy and passivity; It’s not enough to simply feel bad about injustice. God calls us to direct action, and angrily laments when we fail to act:

“None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth….” (Isaiah 59:4)

According to Strong’s Concordance “calleth” means to plead, to cry out, to utter a loud sound, to summon, commission. One definition even conveys the idea of accosting a person. It all describes perfectly the very essence of a march – a loud pleading, summoning, a figurative hands-on shaking up of those in position to “do justice to the afflicted and needy” as God has so charged us all.

Neither of the marches required 100 percent agreement on 100 percent of the issues, rather they created opportunities for people to put aside their differences, and for one incredible, miraculous moment to come together on one accord about what they do agree on. Outside of worship, it is one of the closest things to an Acts 2:1 moment that we can ever experience.

Those weary feet that stood on the National Mall 50 years ago carried weary hearts, weary minds, and weary spirits that were refreshed and energized by collective hopes and united pleas. I hear the curious and the cynical again asking, “So what?” Well, how about we change the question to “Sow what?”

Each marcher’s firmly planted step sowed beauty for ashes, strength for fear, gladness for mourning and peace for despair. Among the first things to sprout from what was sown in the 1963 march was passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which removed the cruel, blatantly racist barriers that prevented African-Americans from voting. The most recent seed to sprout was the election of President Barack Obama, the nation’s first African-American President.

“Sow what?”

The power of the original and commemorative marches sowed enough strength in the participants to “push open those stubborn gates” of racism as President Bill Clinton described them, reminding us that we must push on because “America is always on a journey…we all have to run our lap.”

“Sow what?”

The 2013 commemorative marches sowed seeds of remembrance as one generation recounted to the next how God moved mountains to make way for what many of us take for granted today. “They came to Washington so we could come today…We owe them for what we have today,” Al Sharpton explained.

The commemorative march allowed a new generation to say, in accord with Psalm 44:1, “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, [what] work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.”

Lest we believe that yesterday’s victories means tomorrow is care free, Bernice King, Dr. King’s youngest child, explained that “inherent social biases…often degenerate into violence” when left unchallenged, warning “if freedom stops crying, the sound will disappear and the atmosphere will be charged with something else.”

“Sow what?”

We march in order to sow into the next generation what is needed for the next, and to prevent “something else” from sprouting up, eroding the harvest, and destroying us all.

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