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The discussion of the subject of physical healing is fraught with difficulties. This is partly because many people assume that the condition for which healing may be sought represents a fundamental defect from which a person needs deliverance. A case in point is the incident in the Gospels in which the disciples enquired into the reason for a man’s blindness: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2). Do we sometimes operate with the same defective perspective that the disciples manifested in John 9?

On a recent visit to Yangon, Myanmar, thanks to the kind cooperation of Ler Htoo, general secretary of the Karen Baptists of the USA and Patrick Loo Ni, president of the Self-Supporting Kayin Baptist Mission Society (SSKBMS), I had the privilege of visiting the Yangon Christian School for the Blind operated by the Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind (MCFB). The school was established in 1975 to meet an urgent need.

In a cultural situation in which people believe that those born with a physical disability do not deserve to be treated as “normal” human beings, someone needed to take action to address the injustice done to the blind. In Myanmar, God raised up U Thein Lwin who himself was not born blind, but who lost his sight as a result of an accident. Since 1975, U Thein, now an ordained Baptist pastor, has committed himself to a ministry to persons who are blind.

The highlight of my visit to the school was the rendition of a song by the entire student body accompanied with great skill by musicians from the school. I was struck by the message of the song, which a translator helped me understand. This is the song’s refrain:

I am blind and you look at me with pity and I am grateful for this.  
But, I will try my best to ensure that you won’t look at me with pity anymore.

I was pleased to learn that the SSKBMS, one of the two BWA member organizations in the country, associates itself closely with the Yangon School for the Blind. One fundamental tenet of this BWA member body is that the organization must share in God’s mission but without over-reliance on sources of funding that are external to Myanmar. The SSKBMS are fully aware that their self-designation raises uncomfortable theological issues. As they told me during my visit, the organization is self-supporting, but God-dependent.

Like the SSKBMS and, in the spirit of this God-dependence, the Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind places emphasis on the liberation dimension of its mission. It emphasizes that the sole criterion for membership in the student body of the Yangon School is that one is blind. The religious, ethnic, or ideological label a person wears is considered irrelevant to acceptance in the school. The SSKBMS are fully aware that their self-designation raises uncomfortable theological issues. As they told me during my visit, the organization is self-supporting, but God-dependent.

The history of the churches’ involvement in God’s mission to liberate people is long and significant. Those of us who are planning to travel to Turkey in July for the BWA Annual Gathering may well be savoring the memory of the social witness of the Cappadocian fathers – Basil, bishop of Caesarea (modern Kayseri); Gregory, bishop of Nyssa (near modern Nevşehir); and Gregory, bishop of Nazianzus (Nenizi). We certainly would not mention them without also referring to Macrina, sister to Basil and Gregory, who was herself an innovator in the delivery of social ministry to the poor.

The servants of God, when a famine ravaged their homeland in 368-369 CE, proclaimed a constructive message about Christian responsibility in the context of poverty. Consider, for example, Basil’s response to the famine. He declared, “Whoever has the power to alleviate . . . evil, but deliberately opts for profit by it, should be condemned as a murderer.” He also rebuked those who charged excessive interest on loans to the poor and thereby offered “poisons” that increased the poverty of the starving instead of relieving their destitution.

When the famine was over, Basil built a “poorhouse” where the very needy could be cared for – an institution some refer to as “the first Christian hospital.” Perhaps what triggered Basil’s response was Macrina’s social ministry.

Notwithstanding all we have said, many episodes in the history of the church reveal that the historical church is capable of terrible atrocity. However, many are the examples of projects undertaken by the church community, or initiated by persons inspired by the love of Christ, that provide a salutary reminder of what is possible when the Holy Spirit transforms people who then unite with others in practicing the love and justice that Jesus inspires.

The story of the Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind and their song about pitying eyes should remind us of the need to analyze what motivates us to do good works. Then, for us, duty will never be bound up with pity but with the love God shows us in Jesus Christ.

Neville Callam
The Impact of American Baptist Mission Work in Myanmar

by Reid Trulson

The Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) held a celebration in December 2013 marking the anniversary of the arrival in Myanmar of missionaries Adoniram and Ann Judson, who came 200 years earlier in July 1813.

The four-day event culminated a series of celebrations held throughout the year by the MBC’s 18 regional and language conventions and churches. Some 30,000 people registered for the celebration, and reports indicate that an additional 14,000 people also came. Attendees arrived in Yangon, coming from all parts of Myanmar and elsewhere in Asia, as well as from Africa, Europe and the Americas.

The event recounted contributions of American Baptist mission work in Myanmar, beginning with the Judsons. Adoniram and Ann Judson had sailed from the United States to India in 1812 as Congregationalist missionaries. During their four-month sea voyage, the Judsons studied scripture concerning baptism. To their surprise, they concluded that baptism is an act of witness for believers, rather than a rite of christening for infants.

Luther Rice, their missionary colleague sailing to India on another ship, came to a similar understanding. In India, the Judsons and Rice were baptized by immersion by William Carey’s missionary co-worker, William Ward. Forbidden by the British East India Company to remain in India, the Judsons made their way to Myanmar to join work begun by Carey’s son, Felix. Rice returned to the US to help American Baptists expand their missionary outreach.

By 1814, Rice and other mission-minded Baptists formed a national organization, “The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Mission.” That mission agency, known today as American Baptist International Ministries (IM), appointed the Judsons as its first missionaries. Soon it began sending other missionaries to work alongside the Judsons in Myanmar.

In 1820 it initiated mission work in Africa by sending Lott Carey and Colin Teague to Liberia, and in 1832 it began work in Europe by sending Jean Casimir Rostan to France.

The mission in Myanmar had multiple impacts. While Adoniram Judson translated scripture into Burmese, his colleagues worked with other language groups. They wrote grammar books and dictionaries, created orthographies, translated scripture, taught literacy and printed growing literature in previously oral languages. This preserved and strengthened languages and cultures that were surrounded by dominant majority groups.

The missionaries advanced education, helped adults gain literacy and established schools for the general education of children. Education for girls undergirded the concept of gender equality that is affirmed by the MBC.

It was evident that local evangelists were essential to the wide sharing of the gospel. Local pastors were needed for effective pastoral care in newly forming churches. From the start, the American Baptist mission emphasized training pastors, evangelists and lay leaders, affirming their full leadership responsibility. The mission taught democratic self-government in local churches and advocated for religious liberty for all.

Elisha Abbott, an early missionary in Bassein in western Myanmar, saw that the strongest churches were self-supporting. In advocating self-support, Abbott was ahead of his time. The work in Bassein was the earliest large-scale demonstration that churches that learned early to support their own leaders and ministries tended to exhibit superior health.

The practice of medicine was an effective context in which to share the gospel. The mission trained medical personnel, built clinics and hospitals, and formed centers where people with leprosy became an area of special focus.

The mission also gave attention to agriculture, training villagers in new farming methods and introducing improved strains of crops and livestock. Here was yet another area in which human need could be met while bearing witness to God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ.

The bond with Baptists in Myanmar also had an impact on Baptist life in the US. Not only did the mission in Myanmar lead Baptists in the US to organize on a national basis for the first time, it also spurred the formation of local mission societies, area associations, and state conventions. The mission in Myanmar provided new context for understanding Scripture.

In the 1820s, Baptists calling themselves “old school” or “primitive” rejected the creation of any entities beyond the local church. This anti-mission interpretation created the first major split among Baptists in the US. The second and larger split occurred when mission leaders refused to appoint slaveholders as missionaries. Reacting to the mission agency’s anti-slavery stance, churches in the south withdrew from the General Missionary Convention in 1845 and created the Southern Baptist Convention.

Women found that as missionaries in Myanmar, they could often fulfill God’s call to preach and teach more readily than they could as church members at home in the US. In the 1870s women formed separate organizations to send and support single women who otherwise would have been unable to serve or lead.

Years later, mission leaders accurately observed that Baptists in both the US and Myanmar had been learning by experience. Their mission together was truly “a great experiment.”

Reid Trulson is executive director of American Baptist International Ministries.
Early American Missionaries in Myanmar

By Stan Slade

The arrival of Adoniram and Ann Judson in Myanmar in 1813 inspired Baptists in the United States to create a national mission organization that appointed the Judsons as its first missionaries and sent others to join the work.

As the Judsons learned Burmese, translated scripture and wrote Christian tracts, they asked for a co-worker that was a trained printer. George and Phebe Hough were sent in 1816 to meet that need. Their appointment expanded the capacity to share the gospel through literature.

When the Judsons urged the mission to send a medically trained missionary, Jonathan Price and his wife were sent in 1821. Jonathan Price would serve 18 months of imprisonment and suffering alongside Adoniram Judson and others during the first Anglo-Burmese war. Price and the missionary doctors that followed him shared the gospel with patients while providing medical care. A century later, Richard Buker would report that more than 80 percent of patients with leprosy had become Christians.

Ann Judson began a school for girls that led to the establishment of other schools. Mission in Myanmar was now in the early stages of holistic development with literature, medicine and education leading the way. Holistic mission would include economic development for rural people when American Baptists sent Braxton and Lena Case as the first agricultural missionaries in 1915. Braxton Case founded the Pyinmana Agricultural School, the first of its kind in Myanmar.

George Dana Boardman and his wife Sarah arrived to join the work in 1827. As the Boardmans began to work among the Karen people, they met Ko Tha Byu, a Karen man whom Adoniram Judson had redeemed from slavery. After being baptized by George Dana Boardman, Ko Tha Byu began a remarkable evangelistic ministry that was used by the Spirit of God to start a “people movement” of Karen people coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

In 1836, Elisha Abbott arrived to work among the Karen. Abbott was surprised to discover Karen who had come to faith through reading two small books written in Burmese by Adoniram Judson at a time when the Karen were forbidden to have books or learn to read. Abbott’s first baptism in Bassein in 1838 was of a young chief named Shway Weing. Six weeks after his baptism, Weing was arrested in Rangoon (Yangon), beaten and tortured for possessing several books. Despite the persecution, the young chief persisted in sharing the gospel. By 1839, more than 2,000 Karen had come to faith through his witness.

Shway Weing and Ko Tha Byu illustrate that more people came to faith through the witness of local evangelists than through the foreign missionaries. This aligned with American Baptist missiology and was affirmed in 1865 by the mission’s corresponding secretary who noted, “It is not the object of missions to convert all, or even the larger part of the people of a country, and carry them forward to a high state of Christian civilization.” The role of a mission organization, he said, is to bring indigenous churches into being. The members of those churches then take the central role in evangelizing their own country.

Cross-cultural missionaries had crucial roles. As they worked to understand the local languages, customs and worldviews, they became catalysts of change. They helped people come to know God’s love through faith in Jesus as they brought skills and resources to meet human needs.

In 1851, one year after Adoniram Judson’s death, Lovell and Marilla Ingalls arrived in Myanmar where Lovell had previously served. When her husband died five years later, Marilla settled in Thongze, a Burmese village distant from Rangoon. Through Marilla’s remarkable gift of evangelism and 40-year ministry, many ethnic Burmese came to faith.

Adoniram and Ann Judson, early 19th century American Baptist missionaries to Myanmar. They voyaged to Asia on the sailing brig Caravan.
During the first 50 years, most of the missionaries sent to Myanmar were theologically trained ordained men whose wives were considered “assistant missionaries.” While single women were generally not appointed, those related to missionary couples were occasionally sent to assist. American Baptist women changed this pattern in the 1870s by forming separate women’s mission societies and sending many single women missionaries. These women fulfilled a full range of ministries. They preached, taught and translated scripture, and trained pastors and women evangelists. They practiced medicine, established clinics and hospitals and trained doctors and nurses.

In lower Myanmar from the 1880s, most of the doctors were women sent by the Woman’s American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. The first single woman medical missionary, Ellen Mitchell, had served as a nurse during the American Civil War before being sent to Myanmar in 1879. Mitchell was memorialized by a hospital built in her name in Moulmein after her death. Missionary nurse Selma Maxville, who was martyred in 1950, was memorialized by a pagoda raised by grateful Buddhist neighbors at the site of her martyrdom in 1960.

In 1966, Myanmar’s military government expelled all the missionaries. Many American Baptist missionaries had become forever associated with their ministry in Myanmar and the ethnic communities among which they served. Likewise, two centuries of relationships between Baptists in Myanmar and the US had bound both together and forever shaped their identities.

Stan Slade is associate executive director and global consultant with American Baptist International Ministries.

Baptists in Myanmar

During December 5-8, 2013, the Myanmar Baptist Convention celebrated the 200th anniversary arrival of Baptist missionaries Adoniram and Ann Judson in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. The event was attended by more than 30,000 people from all over the nation.

Myanmar has a population of more than 61 million people. Buddhism is the majority religion. Christians form a minority, between four and seven percent of the population, with two thirds being Protestant. Baptists are the largest Protestant group in the country. Almost half of Protestants are Baptists.

The first Christian mission to arrive in present-day Myanmar was the Roman Catholic Barnabite Mission in 1722. In 1807 English Baptists opened a mission but the first permanent Baptist evangelists and mission came in 1813 from the United States, under the Judsons.

During Judson’s lifetime, only the Burman, Mon and Karen ethnic groups responded to the gospel. At his death in 1850, there were 74 churches and 7,904 baptized members. Gradually the Baptist mission spread out to all the peoples in Myanmar. In 1865, Baptist churches in Myanmar organized themselves under the name Burma Baptist Missionary Convention.

In 1954, the name was changed to the Burma Baptist Convention and later to the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC). The MBC represents most Baptists in the country. MBC aims to preach and propagate the good news of Jesus Christ in Myanmar and throughout the whole world, abide in Baptist faith and practice, educate its members for Christian maturity and discipleship, be united with other Christians in Christ for mission and service and be good citizens of the country.

MBC provides financial contribution to emergency relief and rehabilitation activities for natural disasters, provides material contribution to people in hard to reach areas and those working for opium substitution, provides technical assistance for forest conservation, participates in community development activities such as water and sanitation and income generation, provides awareness training on HIV and AIDS in border areas and organizes training in capacity building and development projects.

MBC comprises 18 affiliated conventions and two directly affiliated local churches under its umbrella, including the Karen Baptist Convention (KBC), the largest. Each of the member conventions of the MBC includes several associations. For instance, the KBC includes 20 associations.

MBC operates the Myanmar Institute of Theology, the leading Christian seminary in Myanmar. It was founded in 1927.

MBC General Secretary Yan Kho Pau said the 200th anniversary celebration “is one of the greatest historic events in our church’s modern history.” He declared that this “is an opportunity to commemorate our forefathers who had been laboring through their hard work in the mission field.”
D

elegates attending the 2014 Annual Gathering of the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF) seemed to be especially concerned about congregational transformation and renewal.

This was the result of a straw poll conducted after Baptist leaders, pastors and other representatives from the United States and Canada considered a dozen theological, ethical, social and other issues over a period of two days, from March 6-7, in the city of Philadelphia in the US.

NABF General Secretary George Bullard said the concern for the renewal of congregational life is placed within the broader context of the Baptist family. “We believe congregational transformation and renewal comes when we recognize that we are participating, as local congregations, as part of a larger family of Baptist Christians who are Kingdom residents which in turn impacts the way the congregation lives this out in its own community context.”

Bullard, who is also the Baptist World Alliance regional secretary for North America, noted that focusing on mission was deemed to be a first step in congregational transformation, including addressing issues of poverty, hunger and education. This would help congregations to “expand outside their comfort zone,” enabling churches to “engage in more extensive and intensive witness.” In participating in mission, it is best that the local church does so in partnership with other churches and especially with Baptist denominations, while also working with others, such as the Baptist World Alliance, which already has an extensive international network and contacts.

It was stressed that the promotion of the spiritual experience and encounter that accompany such mission

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF), one of six regional fellowships of the Baptist World Alliance, celebrated its 50th anniversary and marked the 200th anniversary of combined Baptist work in North America during its Annual Gathering in Philadelphia in the United States, from March 6-7.

The NABF grew out of efforts to encourage Baptist mission and fellowship in North America, beginning in 1814 with the formation of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign

Below left: BWA President John Upton (right) greeting a participant at the NABF Annual Gathering in March
Missions. Because it met every three years, the general convention came to be popularly known as the Triennial Convention.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the number of Baptist groups in North America increased due to divisions and new mission work, such as the formation in 1845 of the Southern Baptist Convention by Baptists in the southern United States on issues over slavery.

The historically African American groups also went through a series of divisions with the formation of the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), which split from the National Baptist Convention, USA (NBCUSA), in 1915; the Progressive National Baptist Convention which split off from NBCUSA on issues related to the civil rights movement in 1961; and the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America, which was formed out of the NBCA in 1988.

Other Baptist groups in the US and Canada grew out of mission by and to immigrants. These include the Baptist General Conference, now known as Converge Worldwide, which had its beginning among Scandinavian immigrants; and the North American Baptist Conference, initially an association of Baptists in the US and Canada of German ethnic heritage.

In December 1955, the Joint Baptist Jubilee Advance Committee (BJA) was formed by seven groups as part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Baptist work on a national scale on the continent. In March 1963, the BWA responded to a suggestion by the BJA that the BWA establish “a North American Baptist Fellowship… in order to conserve the gains and values which have resulted from the Baptist Jubilee Advance and to increase opportunities for fellowship and for sharing mutual concerns.”

The BWA approved the formation of the NABF comprising “Baptist bodies of North America who hold membership in the BWA.” The new entity was “to continue the gains of values which resulted from the Baptist Jubilee Advance program and to increase opportunities for fellowship and sharing mutual concerns; to collect and disseminate information; to cooperate with all departments of the Baptist World Alliance; to strengthen Baptist work; to arrange meetings for fellowship, study and inspiration.”

In May 1964, at the final celebratory act of the BJA campaign, the seven Baptist groups met in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to consider the formation of the NABF.

Though not all were ready for this move, by 1965 five of the seven original BJA partner groups gave their assent; three in the United States, the American Baptist Convention, the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference and the Southern Baptist Convention; as well as the Baptist Federation of Canada and the National Baptist Convention of Mexico.

(Continued on next page)
Greg Long is another Native American Baptist worth knowing. He’s living out the Baptist story as the pastor of Selah Congregation in Flagstaff, Arizona, in the Navajo Nation, the largest Native American-governed territory within the US. Born and raised on the Navajo reservation, Long left his home in north central Arizona for Waco, Texas, to attend seminary. In 2000, Long became the first Navajo student to graduate from Baylor University’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

Following graduation, Long returned to the Navajo Nation and later started Selah Congregation, a multicultural fellowship proud of its ethnic diversity that includes both Navajo and Jewish peoples, with a unique multilingual worship service held every Saturday. “The worship style is based on Jewish liturgical traditions, incorporating both Baptist and Na-Dené distinctives to produce a vibrant, nourishing worship experience,” Long explained.

The worship style of Selah Congregation is based on Jewish liturgical traditions. Matriarch Sally lights a candle.

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The worship format found at Selah Congregation emphasizes the seasons of worship found in the Torah: Shabbat, the Spring Festival Cycle (Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of First Fruits and the Feast of Weeks), and the Fall Festival Cycle (Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths).

Selah Congregation’s worship style reflects the multitude of parallels between historic Navajo and Jewish cultures, according to Long. He noted that both cultures have a shared history of

Twenty six Baptist organizations are now affiliated with the NABF, including denominational, mission, advocacy, professional and news organizations.

The NABF continues its mission to “promote fellowship and collaboration among Baptists in North America” and to “further the aims and objectives of the Baptist World Alliance so far as these affect the life of Baptist churches in North America.”

Among NABF more recent initiatives are its Disaster Response Network to “correlate the response among participating Baptist groups to disasters throughout North America,” and the FutureBaptists Champions Network, “a Collaborative Missional Movement.”
oppression and genocide, loss of land, loss of language and loss of culture.

Long and Selah Congregation have identified with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship since the church’s founding in 2010. This identification with CBF has been strengthened through Long’s relationship with Glen Foster, coordinator of CBF West, the regional body of CBF that encompasses 13 states. Foster’s congregation, Pantano Baptist Church of Tucson, Arizona, ordained Long to Christian ministry in March 2010.

“In 2002, I made acquaintance with Glen Foster, and I haven’t looked back,” Long said. “Glen has become a great friend and brother in the Lord.”

Foster recently had an opportunity to worship with Long and Selah Congregation in the home of new church members. “It was exciting to see a vibrant congregation that is growing and reaching young families,” Foster said. “Greg is a creative thinker, talented artist and wonderful communicator.”

Long ministers alongside his wife, Sheila, who leads music during worship and teaches the children. Together, they own and operate an art gallery of original Navajo works in nearby Winslow.

When Long left Waco and returned to his childhood home on the Navajo reservation, his return was not a simple relocation. Long returned with a vision for his community, one rich in cultural history but extremely poor in terms of infrastructure and other basic needs, with more than 50 percent of the population unemployed.

In September 2013, Together for Hope, CBF’s rural poverty initiative, held its three-day annual meeting in Flagstaff to share stories of what God is doing in some of the poorest rural communities in the US.

“Being in Arizona and learning about Native Americans was deeply moving for me,” said Jim Smith, interim coordinator of CBF Global Missions. “I knew of abuse and genocide from books written to supplement the typical narrative of American advancement into the pioneer territories of the American West. Hearing descriptions and explanation of past laws as well as current regulations by our government impacting life in the Navajo Nation drew back the curtain and revealed a disturbing pattern of colonialism and systemic oppression of noble people.

“Greg Long is a fellow Baptist who cares for suffering people. He has a holistic vision for restoration of the person, the community and the environment, which I wholeheartedly support.”

Following a traditional lunch of roasted lamb, fry bread and tortillas, Long shared with the group his vision of self-sufficiency for the reservation’s residents. He gave the group a tour of the area of the reservation where residents lack electricity and running water while three water-producing wells sit capped on the land. He hopes to address these needs through economic and community development projects. The first step to implementing Long’s vision is tapping these wells and piping the water to homes, as well as making the water available for livestock and crop irrigation.

Long’s agriculturally-based vision includes launching a ranch with cattle, horses, sheep, goats and an auction house, stockyard and feed lot. Organic farming on the land would also facilitate the creation of a farmers’ market. Long dreams of bringing electricity to the area’s residents and building a multiuse community center for education and cultural events.

“We met to listen and to dream for a future work,” said Stephanie Vance, Together for Hope interim manager. “Greg spoke to the group, which included national and state/regional CBF leaders, CBF field personnel as well as community facilitators, about his journey through seminary and his deepening understanding of God’s calling for him and for his community. Greg has a plan that will bring sustainable farming, tourism and infrastructure to the area.”

As Long embarks on making his dream a reality, Together for Hope is acting as a resource for him and his community.

“Greg Long is a dynamic leader and is an example to all who dream of a better future for their hometown,” Vance said.
Callam Proposes Merger of Baptist Congress and Youth Conference

Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam has proposed that the Baptist World Congress and the Baptist Youth World Conference be merged.

Callam made the proposal amid concerns of declining attendance at the two global events. Both are planned by the BWA and are held at five-year intervals, normally two years apart from each other.

"Over the years, attendance at these international events has been less than encouraging," he told the BWA Executive Committee. "The relatively small attendance has severely strained BWA financial resources and has had the effect of diverting attention of BWA staff from other pressing aspects of the BWA mission."

Callam provided statistics to back up his concern. The congress had more than 20,000 participants at the 1980 meetings in Canada. In 2010 in Hawaii, attendance was 4,400.

The youth conference had an attendance of approximately 7,000 in Scotland in 1988 and 8,000 in the United States in 1998. In 2013, just about 2,700 youth attended the event in Singapore.

"I believe that sound stewardship needs to be exercised in our approach to conceiving and planning future international conferences beyond 2015," the BWA leader said. Plans are already at an advanced stage for the 21st Baptist World Congress in Durban, South Africa, in July 2015.

"It is important to note that what I am asking us to consider is the transformation of both the congress and the youth conference through their integration into one vast opportunity for interaction among Baptists," he told the Executive Committee. "This transformation does not affect only the youth conference, but also the congress. The driving force behind this appeal is the firm desire to preserve the opportunities these two quinquennial events afford."

Callam believes that "thoughtful planning should preserve the opportunity for the youth to share fellowship with each other and to experience worship in ways that reflect the admissible values they hold." Similarly, "careful planning should also offer to adults and children the opportunity for meaningful encounter with each other and with the youth population of our churches."

Callam envisages that the 2020 global meetings "could be a great gathering in which children, youth, young people and adults in the church community across the worldwide Baptist family have the opportunity to experience a first great gathering in which the best features of both the youth conference and the congress are brought together in an appropriate way."

Such an "international gathering will provide BWA with an opportunity to respond to the challenge to preserve some of our best mission consciousness-raising opportunities, to facilitate extensive networking among Baptists worldwide, and to offer worship and fellowship opportunities using a flexible, effective, and sustainable vehicle," Callam declared.

Callam indicated that any future planning of global conferences and meetings should take into account technological developments, especially in international communications. “As is well known, ways of understanding what it means to be together have changed,” he told the group of Baptist leaders from around the world. “Although not all aspects of the change are welcome, we need to bear this development in mind when we are planning international meetings.”

The Executive Committee approved the establishment of a General Secretary’s Special Commission to consider the possible design for such an international meeting.
Moldovan to Receive Human Rights Award

Ilie Coada of Moldova is the recipient of the 2014 Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award.

The award is given each year by the Baptist World Alliance to an individual who has made significant and effective contribution to secure, protect, restore or preserve human rights.

The announcement was made during a meeting of the BWA Executive Committee in King of Prussia/Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, in the United States on March 5. Award presentation will be at the next meeting of the BWA General Council in Izmir, Turkey, in July.

Coada, a Baptist pastor, dedicated his life and resources to preventing young girls from becoming victims of human trafficking. The Bethania Foundation is the vehicle through which he manages and runs his many projects.

He opened a shelter for vulnerable girls, many of whom are fresh out of orphanages, to reside and to continue their education. The shelter doubles as a transition home where girls attending schools in the city may go for holidays and weekends. Coada founded a community center that offers after-school and summer programs, including tutoring, to more than 500 children, so that risk of trafficking is reduced for youth in the area. He also instituted scholarships that enable at-risk girls to attend vocational schools and universities.

Coada developed greenhouses and other small businesses that offer employment to girls and women in the community so they may have paying jobs, helping them to take care of their children.

He began an elder-care program on the compound of the children’s center so the elders can share meals and fellowship and spend time with the children as “adopted grandparents.”

Coada engaged in these various ministries at risk to his safety. Some human traffickers recruit directly from orphanages, and Coada’s work in these institutions has restricted their ability to recruit from the orphanages, resulting in threats on his life. His courage rests on his belief, drawn from Christian scripture, that “there is no fear in love.”

“Pastor Ilie meets the threats of the mafia with wisdom, wit, courage and transparency,” said the European Baptist Federation. “He knows God’s call on his life and he’s willing to risk everything to follow the voice of the One who loves him and who has saved him.”

Even while combating human trafficking, Coada continues to pastor a local congregation and plant new churches in Moldova.

“Rev. Ilie Coada is an incredible example of a Baptist pastor who has not only preached the Word, but has also lived the Word authentically, quietly, humbly and without fanfare,” said Lauran Bethell, recipient of the 2005 BWA Human Rights Award. “He has saved countless children from the worst kinds of slavery in the sex industry and has been an inspiration to me and many others.”

Honoring a Baptist Icon: Duke McCall

The family of Duke McCall expressed gratitude to the Baptist World Alliance for honoring the life and ministry of the outstanding Baptist leader who died on April 2, 2013.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam read and presented to the family a copy of a resolution that was adopted in tribute to McCall by the BWA General Council in its meeting at the Annual Gathering in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in July 2013.

Callam gave his personal reflections on the impact that McCall, who was BWA president from 1980-1985, had on the international umbrella organization. “He was able to lift the organization to a new level,” Callam declared. “Dr. McCall was one of the major architects of the internationalization of the BWA. He wanted this to be a global family and not just a North Atlantic alliance.”

(Continued on next page)
J. Deotis Roberts and his family were pleased to receive a resolution that was adopted in his honor by the Baptist World Alliance.

BWA General Secretary Neville Callam traveled to the state of Maryland in the United States on December 18 where he read and presented the resolution passed by the BWA General Council in its meeting in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in July 2013.

Roberts, a major Black American theologian, spoke of the influences on his life’s work. The earliest of these influences was growing up and working in the segregated south in the US, where he was fully aware of and experienced the sufferings and difficulties faced by African Americans; the life and faith of his parents, especially his father, a devout Christian; and his call to the Christian ministry, a watershed moment in his life.

His experiences as a church pastor, teaching people in church, supervising other pastors and interacting with marginalized groups such as immigrant workers and prisoners, enabled him to “become an instrument” used by God “to be a service in various areas of life.”

His international exposure – traveling to other countries; meeting students from other parts of the world, such as Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe; and encountering scholars from many fields – all served to inspire him. He declared that “conversations with people of other religions and cultures have come to be part of my reflection.”

Roberts did his PhD studies at the prestigious University of Edinburgh in Scotland, which helped to shape his theological understanding, as did the experiences he faced upon returning home to the US. “Even after earning a PhD from Edinburgh, most scholars did not want to have anyone of my complexion teaching in their field,” Roberts said. He eventually received a teaching position at Howard University in Washington, DC, in the US, a historically African American school. “I was fortunate to have been invited to come to Howard to teach theology and philosophy of religion and to share with those in the law school.”

At Howard, students clamored to know more about African culture and religions rather than the usual classical subjects being taught. This led him to spend two months on the continent, which enabled him to become more aware of religious practices, beliefs, and languages in countries such as Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya.

While teaching at Eastern University in Pennsylvania in the US, he had dialogues with pioneering African American Studies professor at Temple University, Molefi Kete Asante. These conversations broadened and deepened his own understanding and perspective of African culture and language, and led directly to one of Roberts’ many books, Africentric Christianity: A Theological Appraisal for Ministry.

Roberts had students from various countries in his classes. At George Mason University in Northern Virginia, close to Washington, DC, he taught the children of diplomats and other embassy staff in some of his classes. “I had to deal not only with black students but white students and students from Asia and elsewhere,” he said. “It was important to hold a conversation with them. I had to deal with diversity and multiculturalism.” Similar
BWA and CBF Partner to Increase Baptist Presence at the UN

The Baptist World Alliance and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) have formed a partnership to identify and respond to the needs of people and congregations worldwide through joint participation in work with the United Nations (UN).

The collaborative effort seeks to increase the Baptist presence at the UN, maximizing the potential for the BWA's extensive UN credentials to increase and strengthen relationships and partnerships in and around the UN. The groups will seek to promote spokespersons such as activists, pastors, and scholars that can speak to the groups' concerns in an official capacity. The parties will also create publications focusing on both theological and public policy concerns that surround issues important to both the BWA and CBF.

Raimundo Barreto, director of the BWA Division of Freedom and Justice, said the face of international relations has dramatically changed in the past decades, and public diplomacy now includes not only governments, but economic agents and so-called global civil society with a number of new actors – multinational corporations, the press, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and religious organizations.

. . . seek to promote spokespersons such as activists, pastors, and scholars that can speak for the groups' concerns in an official capacity.

He said the partnership is an important collaboration on critical issues. “This collaboration with CBF will certainly make a positive impact on our capacity to occupy new spaces and extend the reach of our work at the United Nations,” he said. “We look forward to all the new possibilities that this collaborative work will enable us to pursue.”

Barreto said that in the early 1970s “the visionary leaders of the BWA already understood the need for Baptists to advocate for freedom, justice and peace at these levels, and this vision led the BWA to pursue consultative status as an international NGO at the United Nations.”

He said the BWA consistently worked to increase the Baptist presence in that setting using all the instruments available to make its voice meaningfully heard. One of those strategies is to work together with BWA member bodies that also see the need to play a role in that setting.

CBF has personnel and partners worldwide and will expand its global impact through this effort. CBF participation at the UN will be prioritized in accordance with the principles of its eight mission communities, which include Education, Economic Development, Healthcare, Justice and Peacemaking, Church Starts and Faith Sharing, Internationals, Disaster Response, and Poverty and Transformation.

CBF field personnel and partners can also mobilize, along with other local Baptist leaders in different countries, for advocacy on issues of common concern at the national level, strengthening the advocacy work done at the UN.

Stephen Reeves, CBF associate coordinator for partnerships and advocacy, said the partnership with the BWA is an important step in the Fellowship’s work to speak out for others and to be the presence of Christ in the world.

“The Baptist World Alliance is a great partner and has years of experience at the United Nations,” Reeves said. “Working forward to all the new possibilities that this collaborative work will enable us to pursue.”

Roberts and Martin Luther King Jr. are regarded as the two foremost African American Baptist theologians (Cone is African Methodist Episcopal). He said King’s work in reconciliation across racial lines and his concern for the poor were especially helpful. “There were many things in his life and his thought that were very resourceful to me,” Roberts acknowledged. Part of Roberts’ research was directed toward understanding King’s life and thoughts and his understanding of the kingdom of God. “This was a very important part of my thinking. He influenced me greatly theologically through his connection with the Black experience, the Black church, and as a Baptist.”

Roberts admitted that Black theology does not have the same impact now as it once had, but believes it still has a place and is still very much alive in Black churches and Black colleges. “That which produces Black theology is still part of the Black experience.” He does not believe that the US is a post-racial society as some claim it to be. “It is working toward that but as long there are differences, as long as those things remain, this is not a post-racial society.”

experiences occurred during his periods teaching at Yale, Duke, Swarthmore, Claremont and other universities.

A stint teaching in Argentina also made an impression on him. He was appalled that American missionaries took their own racial and racist perspectives to the South American country, leading him to realize that one needs to have a broader perspective beyond one’s own. This confirmed his commitment to develop his thoughts on Black theology.

Interaction with the work of two other noted African American theologians had an impact on Roberts. James Cone and Roberts are the two most recognized Black theologians in the US. Discussions with Cone revealed the basis of their differences in approach to Black theology. “We have different minds. I have an exploratory mind and a different background. Cone’s mind is different. His experiences were different,” he explained.

“We came to the conclusion that whatever differences we had on civil rights had its beginnings in differences in the mind and the approach and experiences we had in different places and at different times.” Roberts, who described himself as an ecumenical Baptist, realized, due to his international and ecumenical experiences and his exploratory mind, that “we had to broaden the conversation to include not only liberation but also reconciliation.” He said he and Cone “bring different approaches to common experiences that Black people had.”

(Continued on next page)
together, we will live out our call to love our neighbors and show compassionate concern for the least of these in a forum focused on international cooperation.”

Currently, the BWA representation at the UN is done mainly through the use of volunteers. As of 2013, there were two volunteers representing the BWA at the UN in New York and one in Geneva.

Some initial work on the part of CBF has already begun. Phyllis Boozer, the coordinator of CBF’s Northeast region, has participated in meetings of the Committee on the Status of Women. Additionally, CBF field personnel Shane McNary has attended two meetings in Geneva regarding the protection of the rights of religious minorities.

Since 1974, the BWA has held special consultative status with the UN through the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The Council provides a setting in which nongovernmental organizations address the world’s economic, social, and environmental challenges, and make policy recommendations. The BWA is also accredited as an NGO through the Department of Public Information, which acts as the public voice of the UN.

The BWA is a member of CoNGO, or the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations. This group facilitates NGO participation in UN decision-making and programs, particularly in the fields of economic and social justice. In addition, the BWA is a member of the Committee of Religious NGOs, has participated in the Ecumenical Working Group, and has interacted with the Office of the High Commission on Human Rights.
T
de government of Eritrea has been accused of participating in or condoning the persecution of Christians.

The Baptist World Alliance pressed participants in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Eritrea by the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, in February, to strongly condemn the flagrant abuses of human rights in the East African country. UPR participants were also asked to urge the Eritrean government to improve the conditions of religious freedom within the country.

“Since more than two decades the Eritrean regime led by President Isaias Afwerki and the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice has systematically committed flagrant abuses of human rights,” the BWA said in its report. “While violations are broad, perhaps no community has suffered more thoroughly and completely than the numerous adherents of religious communities deemed unacceptable by the illiberal government, most especially evangelical Christians.”

The BWA report reminded the international community that, according to international documentation such as the USCIRF 2013 Report, there are between 2,000 and 3,000 religious prisoners in Eritrea, the majority being evangelical Christians. Religious prisoners, the BWA asserted, are frequently beaten and tortured, denied legal recourse and medical aid, and are held in deplorable conditions such as in underground cells and metal containers.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of January 2013 more than 300,000 Eritrean refugees have fled to neighboring countries.

While evangelical Christians are especially targeted, the BWA said other Christians have also experienced persecution. Abune Antonios, who is 86 years old, was removed from his position as Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church and has been under house arrest since 2006 without charges. The BWA report, sent to 27 members of the UN Human Rights Council participating in that UPR, also claimed that Muslims were also being persecuted.

The BWA received from Eritrean refugees living in the United States a list with 24 names of pastors and other Christians who have been arrested in Eritrea for their faith since 2003. The list has been submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur for Eritrea, who contacted the BWA for a follow up appointment scheduled for the end of March 2013.

In response to a BWA letter, the Africa East and West Department of the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) said, “We are deeply concerned about reports of inhumane imprisonment and torture of members of certain Christian denominations and religious minorities in Eritrea. FCO Ministers and officials raise human rights issues, both bilaterally and with the EU, including freedom of religion, with the Eritrean Government at every opportunity and will continue to do so.”

The international umbrella Baptist organization, which represents 42 million Baptists in 121 countries and territories, documented the claims made by several Eritrean refugees that “an illegal two percent mandatory ‘donation’ is imposed on Eritrean nationals who live in the United States, Canada, and multiple European countries by the Eritrean government.” The alleged tax, according to Eritrean refugees interviewed for the report, “has been used to fund military arms and related material throughout the destabilized Horn of Africa region.”

Using the opportunity of the UPR, the BWA wrote government leaders, ministers and embassies, urging them to take appropriate action that would help Eritrea to respect the rights of persons.

In a letter to United States Secretary of State John Kerry and others, the BWA pressed Kerry and other recipients to use their offices to “pursue policies which may contribute to enhancing the conditions of religious freedom within Eritrea,” and to curtail “the ability of the Eritrean government to collect the illegal two percent ‘donations’ used to fund military arms in the Horn of Africa.” In addition, governments were being encouraged “to increase the number of Eritrean refugees resettled as a case of special humanitarian concern.”

Twenty-six civil society organizations and individuals that participate with the BWA in the International Religious Freedom Roundtable jointly signed a multi-faith version of the letter sent out by the BWA to increase awareness by the international community of the grim situation of religious minorities in Eritrea.

In the period leading up to the UPR, the BWA urged members of the United Nations Human Rights Council to raise the issues contained in its report. The BWA also drew attention to recommendations made in a previous UPR that the Eritrean government has not implemented. “If the lack of implementation leads to no consequence, the existence of the UPR itself will be compromised,” the BWA said.
Discrimination faced by Baptists and other Christians were raised during a human rights visit to Azerbaijan late last year.

A delegation to the Caucasus country led by Baptist World Alliance Director of Freedom and Justice Raimundo Barreto, “had a two-hour honest and open conversation” with representatives of the Azerbaijani government. “The conversation focused on specific cases and how they could move them forward,” the delegation reported.

The members of Azerbaijan’s State Committee for Work with Religious Association, which hosted the meeting, “expressed their gratitude for the attempt to reach out to them.” They stated that the delegation’s “initiative to take a step towards them obliged them (the government) to take two steps in their direction.”

Issues of concern included the persecution of Christians, difficulties involved in the registration of churches and Christian organizations, as well as the return of property confiscated during the Soviet era. Azerbaijan is a former Soviet republic that regained its independence in 1991, after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Azerbaijan has had a history of discriminatory practices against religious minorities. Two Baptist pastors were arrested and sentenced in the town of Aliabad. In May 2007 Zaur Balaev was arrested and given a two-year sentence after being convicted in August of that year for beating up five policemen and damaging a police car door. Members of Balaev’s church and residents in the town disputed the charges against Balaev, who was released in March 2008 after protests from the BWA, the European Baptist Federation (EBF) and former United States President Jimmy Carter.

In June 2008 Hamid Shabanov was arrested after police claimed to have found an illegal weapon in his home after a raid. He was given “a two-year corrective labor sentence.” Azerbaijan authorities were accused of committing serious procedural violations in their case against Shabanov. Family and townspeople in Aliabad insisted that the weapon that Shabanov allegedly possessed was planted by the police.

The Baptist delegation, which included Christer Daelander, religious freedom representative of the EBF and Karin Åkesson of the Uniting Church of Sweden, traveled to Aliabad and met with both Balaev and Shabanov. The team learned that Balaev’s wife had died just over a month before their arrival. They offered prayer and pastoral support and brought greetings from the global family of Baptists.

A previous human rights visit was made to Azerbaijan in January 2009. Some concerns that were aired in those meetings still remain, including that of new believers being discriminated against in their employment. “It is a common experience among believers to be discriminated against in the workplace when employers learn about their Christian faith, especially if they have converted from Islam,” the 2013 team reported. As in 2009, churches still remaining outside the law and are vulnerable to harassment and persecution due to obstacles they face in getting registered.

The 2013 delegation observed that “there is need for more conversation among Azerbaijani Christians,” including finding common ground between Azeri- and Russian-speaking Christians on matters such as religious freedom.

There appears to be a disconnect between national policy and attitudes at the local level. “Religious freedom obligations are well known by the national central authorities, but are apparently ignored in the regions and/or are poorly implemented by local authorities,” Barreto and his team reported. It seemed as if government officials in the capital city of Baku are open to relaxing the rules having to do with the registration of churches and Christian organizations, while local officials, who implement policies in their jurisdictions, often are not.

The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Azerbaijan has 3,000 members in 22 churches.
Baptists in Africa have expressed deep displeasure at ongoing conflicts on the continent that have led to “wanton destruction of life and property of defenseless and vulnerable citizens.”

Making special reference to the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the All Africa Baptist Fellowship (AABF) called “upon all parties involved to put an end to their anti-social actions and to start a serious search for peace.”

Two of the three countries have significant Baptist populations. There are four Baptist World Alliance member organizations in CAR with total membership of more than 180,000 in more than 770 churches. The DRC has 11 BWA member organizations with more than 1.6 million members in approximately 5,400 churches. South Sudan reports less than 1,000 members, though they were part of the larger Sudan Interior Church, based in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, before the country’s independence.

The BWA, through Baptist World Aid, has sponsored and supported numerous humanitarian and development projects in these countries.

AABF, a regional body of the BWA, urged the respective governments in these countries and others involved in the conflicts to “fulfill their constitutional responsibility to provide and guarantee peaceful co-existence, safety and security for all citizens irrespective of ethnicity, language, color, gender or religion.”

Baptists in Africa and elsewhere were encouraged “to intercede for these countries that respect for human life, peace and stability will soon be restored” and to “take practical action to express their Christian love and compassion to those affected.”

Fighting in the CAR began in 2012 and led to the ousting of the government by Séléka, a Muslim rebel coalition. Attacks were made against Christian civilians. The new president, Michel Djotodia, resigned and was replaced by Catherine Samba-Panza. Her government has taken action to disarm and suppress militia groups that staged retaliatory attacks against Muslims.

Despite a January 2014 ceasefire agreement, fighting continues in South Sudan between the government and rebels. More than 900,000 persons have been displaced as a result of the fighting and are facing possible starvation. South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in July 2011.

The DRC has been bedeviled by wars and conflicts going back decades. An estimated 5.4 million persons have died as a result of the conflicts, making it the costliest in human lives since the Second World War.
Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam made a call for unity among Christians and a commitment to evangelism during a meeting of North American Baptists in the city of Philadelphia in the United States in March.

Callam was addressing the final session of the Annual Gathering of the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF), one of six regional fellowships of the BWA. The 2014 gathering, dubbed “FutureBaptists Convocation,” also marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of the NABF.

Upton said too many people, Baptists included, are overly concerned about stability, security and permanence. “We’ve bought into this absolute fear of change,” Upton told participants at the gathering.

The head of the BWA lifted up Abraham as a model for Baptist Christians, churches and organizations to follow. “Abraham was a prototype of faith. He packed up and went, even though he did not know where he was going.”

Upton said Abraham and his family “were called to go to a new place but would only know it when they got there. They left it all behind.” Similarly, Baptists of the 21st century “need to leave the stability and the security behind,” even though we may now know where it may end.

“Faith is open ended,” Upton stated. “Blessing comes from trusting God on the journey. I don’t have to know where I’m going. I just need to know the One on the journey with me.” He challenged NABF delegates to “never be afraid of the future that God promised.”

Baptist World Alliance President John Upton is encouraging Baptists to be risk takers for the sake of the Christian Gospel.

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Callam shared a vision of “a future in which Baptists participate joyfully in the one church that worships the one God and in which they burn with passion to share the one message of salvation through Jesus Christ.”

In order for the world to believe, this one church is called to share this one message from and about this one God with all of humanity, hence the need for evangelism.

Callam shared a vision of “a future in which Baptists participate joyfully in the one church that worships the one God and in which they burn with passion to share the one message of salvation through Jesus Christ.” A future, he said, that should be marked “by evangelistic fervor in which we boldly and clearly proclaim the Good News of the transformation that God makes possible through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.”
For some time now the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship has been concerned about the lack of unity among Baptists in Barbados.

In an effort to unify Baptists in that country, the CBF convened a meeting with representatives from the Barbados Baptist Convention, the Barbados Baptist Alliance and the Fundamental Baptists.

After five hours of intense discussion, the representatives decided to organize themselves into an association for the purposes of worship, fellowship, joint mission projects as well as joint responses to social issues. This will enable Baptists to bear visible witness to unity and to present to a fragmented society a placard of unity amidst diversity.

Baptist youth in Latin America engaged in extensive mission programs that led 3,880 persons to make decisions for Christ.

“Radical Latino,” a program adopted by the Union of Baptists in Latin America, one of six regional fellowships of the Baptist World Alliance, encourages youth and young adults between 18 and 33 years old to devote a minimum of three months and a maximum of two years to voluntary mission work.

Participants commit to doing pioneer work, including the planting of new churches, the reopening of old mission work that have weakened or closed, and participate in the PARE Project (Portuguese acronym for Program of Support, Rehabilitation and Hope for alcohol and drug addiction).

In 2013, 189 youth from 19 countries participated in the “Radical Latino” program. In the Indigenous Church Planting and Strengthening Project, four new churches were planted in Ecuador and one each in Colombia and Peru. Each new congregation is being supported by an existing church. Three small churches in Chile, two in Colombia and one each in Bolivia and Venezuela received support from the “Radicals.”

PARE Project mission volunteers helped to start a center for recovery for drug addicts and those who are abandoned in Brazil. From initially serving five people, the program has grown in three months to serve more than 150. Enrollees are provided a location for meals, shower, laundry, as well as counseling and the opportunity for worship.

A 10-day medical, religious and social project to the Guaraos indians was conducted in Venezuela. Several soccer and surf “schools” were conducted.

in 2013, 227 churches received assistance, more than 1,100 persons participated in discipleship events, and more than 1,200 church leaders received short term training. Special events were held for more than 15,000 children and approximately 6,500 youth.

The “Radical Latino” program is fulfilling its original aim to help small churches, to provide missionary experience to Latin American Baptist youth and to stir the call to mission in the hearts of young people.
A village founded in Sri Lanka by the Baptist World Alliance and partners is meeting long term needs for housing but is facing challenges associated with recovery after a major disaster. It comprises 72 houses for families made homeless by the December 2004 Asian Tsunami.

The housing complex was completed and inaugurated in September 2006 by the BWA with support from American Baptist Churches USA and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, both of the United States, and British-based BMS World Mission.

Although called “The Baptist Village,” there are no known Baptists or other Christians residing there. Most residents are Buddhists. However, the contribution of the BWA and its partners is clearly marked with a plaque at the community center, the location for social gatherings and activities.

“The community at The Baptist Village seems to be doing well,” said Baptist World Aid Director Rothangliani Chhangte, who visited Sri Lanka in December 2013. “The residents I saw on my visit seemed settled and happy for the most part. They were all very grateful to the Baptist church for their homes.”

A Baptist congregation located approximately 40 kilometers from the village conducts a weekly tutoring program for children, as well as an English language class attended by both children and adults.

But there are challenges. Most urgent is lack of access to a reliable water supply. “The village is not linked to the national water system,” Chhangte said. The local county failed to link the village to the water system due to what it claims to be high costs. “Some homes built their own wells and the Sri Lanka Baptist Union (SLBU) built a water tank to help with the shortage of water but it is still not enough,” Chhangte explained.

Because their main livelihood is fishing, some families sold their
homes and moved closer to the sea where they previously lived. The village, about 15 kilometers from the sea, is deemed too far from the shore. Fishermen are a marginalized group in Sri Lanka and are part of the lower caste. Not much assistance is provided to the lower caste by the government. Churches and nongovernment organizations often take up the slack. E.K. Yasaratne, general secretary of the SLBU, indicated that village residents still seem keen on receiving assistance from Baptists.

Chhangte said women in the village were largely unemployed and are looking for work. “When they lived by the sea, the women used to earn money by making coils from the coconut and palm trees that grew by the ocean. Here in the village the raw materials are not readily available.” In addition, machines are now being used to make the coils so the women’s labor is not needed. “The women could do with some self-employment training, such as sewing classes, shoe making, candle making, etc.,” Chhangte asserted. “They could use funding to start a small project for some of the women who are unemployed.”

Residents of the Baptist Village in Sri Lanka hosting a cultural Christmas pageant and welcoming event for BWAid Director Rothangliani Chhangte who visited in December 2013

**Contributions**

to women’s training and employment in the Sri Lanka Baptist Village may be made

**Online at:**

www.bwanet.org

**or Sent to:**

Baptist World Aid
c/o Baptist World Alliance
405 North Washington Street
Falls Church, VA 22046
USA
The Baptist World Alliance sponsored 12 medical camps and conducted 10 HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns over a period of six months in the western Indian state of Maharashtra.

Hundreds of persons received medical attention at the camps. The camps “brought a change in their lives,” a report by Baptists that conducted the camps said of the patients who were served. These patients would normally have had to join long queues and endure extensive waiting periods to get medical attention.

Many of the patients, mostly slum dwellers in Mumbai, received regular checkups and were given instructions in their own health management.

Serious medical conditions were referred to major hospitals for follow-up and treatment.

The camps led to greater appreciation of the Christian faith. “People have lots of things to share about the services provided to the poor by Christians,” the Baptists involved in the program stated. Although there was no requirement that patients attend church, a “few of the patients joined in regular church activities. They come to church and take part in our worship service regularly.”

The teams running the camps comprised doctors, nurses, medical helpers, counselors and volunteers.

The Eastern Caribbean countries of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Dominica experienced unusual flooding between December 24 and 25, 2013, resulting in loss of life, homelessness, landslides, infrastructural damage to roads and buildings and loss of agricultural produce and livestock.

The Baptist World Alliance sent a sum of US$5,000 in emergency relief.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines was the worst hit with eight dead, five missing, six injured, 209 homeless and 190 in shelters.

In addition to contributions from the BWA, disaster relief was provided for St. Vincent and the Grenadines by the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, Baptist churches in the region and relief agencies.

School uniforms were presented to children in the affected areas, packages with basic food items were given out, materials donated for repairs to damaged houses and agricultural seedlings were offered to farmers and others.
Representatives of the Baptist World Alliance and the World Methodist Council (WMC) met January 30-February 5 at the Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, in the United States. The meeting was the opening session in the first international dialogue between Baptists and Methodists.

The delegations were welcomed by the provost and executive vice president of the university, Bradley Creed, as well as Debra Wallace-Padgett, bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church and Mike McLemore, director of missions for the Birmingham Baptist Association.

The overall theme of the dialogue is faith working through love. Participants discussed presentations on the history, theology, and contemporary global situation of Baptists and Methodists.

The dialogue is co-chaired by Tim Macquiban, superintendent minister of the Cambridge Methodist Circuit and minister of Wesley Methodist Church in Cambridge, England, and Curtis Freeman, research professor and director of the Baptist House of Studies at Duke University Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina, in the US.

Paul Chilcote, dean of Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio in the US, and Fausto Vasconcelos, BWA director of Mission, Evangelism, and Theological Reflection, serve as co-secretaries.

Other Baptist members present were Timothy George, chair of the BWA Commission on Doctrine and Christian Unity and dean of Beeson Divinity School; Deji Isaac Ayegboyin, professor of religious studies, University of Ibadan in Nigeria; Valérie Duval-Poujol, professor of biblical exegesis, Catholic Institute in Paris, France; and Stephen Holmes, senior lecturer in theology, University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

The Methodist delegation included Robert Gribben from Melbourne, Australia, chair of the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the WMC; Ulrike Schuler, professor at the Reutlingen School of Theology in Germany; Malcolm Tan, pastor of Barker Road Methodist Church in Singapore; Lauren Matthews, minister, Umngeni Circuit, Natal Coastal District, Methodist Church of Southern Africa; and Christine Gooden-Benguiche, secretary, Jamaica District Conference, Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas.

The participants worshipped together each day, drawing on the two traditions, and attended the Sunday service at the Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham.

They visited Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, the target of a racially motivated bombing in September 1963 that killed four girls in the midst of the American Civil Rights Movement. Participants met with Carolyn McKinstry, author of While the World Watched, based on her experience as a survivor of the 1963 bombing of the church.

They visited the Civil Rights Institute, a museum and research center in Birmingham’s Civil Rights District that depicts the struggles of the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, including the role played by the church.

The meeting in 2015 is planned for Singapore where the dialogue partners will discuss the nature of the church with special attention to justification and sanctification.
Busisiwe Mayepu, or Busi, used to be a teacher. She was a good teacher and successful in her career. She is hard working, clever, practical, funny, pleasant and committed. She became the assistant to the principal in her school. But the Lord had other plans for Busi.

She heard a call from God to become a pastor. While working as a school teacher, she studied theology and successfully completed her training. She was involved in the work of her local church and the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) and became interested in the Baptist World Alliance. Through God’s generous provision, she had the opportunity and the freedom to attend several international Baptist congresses and was blessed by these experiences.

After completing her theological studies, she served in the Rock of Salvation Baptist Church, one of the largest churches of the BCSA, in Meadowlands (Johannesburg), under senior pastor Tebogo Molaudzi, president of the BCSA. During this time, she was chosen to participate in the project “Without Borders,” a missionary exchange program of the European Baptist Mission. She served in Austria as a missionary for three months. This experience was an eye-opener and an opportunity to grow spiritually and improve her skills.

One day she had a dream. She saw a small church that she did not know, a shack, in a dry and desolate place somewhere in South Africa. She felt God calling her to that church. God even gave her the name of the church: God’s Grace Baptist Church.

Unbeknown to her, the church existed at one stage. It was located in the Free State, near Kronstad, in the middle of nowhere. The pastor had died 12 years earlier and the church could not acquire the services of another pastor. One by one the members disappeared and the church died. There was, however, one sister who faithfully went to the church every Sunday. She brought her meagre offering and placed it on a beam, praying that God might send them a new pastor. Every Sunday she cried out to the Lord on behalf of the church and saved her offering toward that day.

Busi discovered that Rev. Ndebele, deputy president of the BCSA at the time, had the telephone number of that one faithful sister. When Busi came to visit, she found everything the way she had seen it in her dream.

When she spoke with the guardian of the church, the sister looked at Busi and began to cry. “We need a pastor!” she cried out. “You are so young! Does your mother even know where you are?” Busi explained that she received a call from the Lord. It was a poor area and the people did not have any money to pay her. “Don’t worry,” Busi said, “the Lord who has called me will see to it that I am provided for!”

Back home, Busi spoke with her senior pastor. She told him she wanted to leave his church. He was not surprised, thinking that her experiences as a missionary in Austria had given her a taste for “higher things,” but she disabused him of his suspicion. “No, pastor, I am going to the Free State because I have heard the Lord calling me there.”

This happened seven years ago. Busi pastors God’s Grace Baptist Church, traveling each weekend from her home in Johannesburg to Kronstad in the Free State, two hours each way. There is no accommodation available for the pastor at the church. She uses the same car from when she was a teacher and often has breakdowns on the road. At one time she hitchhiked for eight months because there is no bus service available.

Busi does not receive much of a salary because the tithes the people give are small. Poverty is prevalent in the area; severe drought has brought hunger and a serious need for supplies. Despite this, Pastor Busi’s eyes shine with joy and gratitude when she speaks of these past seven years.

The church grew, former members came back, and each family experienced God at work. Mothers are able to earn a little money and send their children to school, ensuring a better life for the next generation. Houses were repaired, fields were tended and brought a little more harvest each year. God sent good rains and in many ways the church experienced God’s blessings.

God honored Busi’s sacrifice and the church matured significantly. There is overwhelming, radiant joy in this church in the midst of the poverty. Hope was planted and is bearing fruit.

Busi is confident that the Lord will honor the commitment of these faithful people and double their portion.

Regina Claas, a BWA vice president and former general secretary of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches (Baptists) in Germany, serves as a missionary in Southern Africa.
The keynote message was brought by Raquel Contreras, president of the BWA Women’s Department. The title of the message was “Be Ready,” based on Revelation 19:6-8. She said the bride is obedient and diligent. It involves a permanent commitment. The bride waits anticipating the time when the groom will come for her. She prepares for the grand day. We are to be filled with hope and to anticipate the Lord’s coming for us, His bride.

The Bible studies were led by Joyce Abugan, recently retired from the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary and the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary where she served for 26 years. The first Bible study came from Ezekiel 1-2 titled, “In The Midst of Storms,” and the second was based on Joshua 2-3 titled, “A Woman of Shame in God’s Hall of Fame.”

On the second day there were three ministry testimonies. Yorie Ito, Japan; Naw Paw Gaw, Myanmar; and Virgie Gopiteo, Philippines. Using the format of a talk show, the women shared stories about their ministries, how God led them to know where and when to go and serve, as well as suggestions for women today as they discern His call in their lives.

Throughout the assembly there were beautiful musical testimonies and 10 workshop choices.

The focus on the third day was mission and missionary testimonies.

Blooming Night Zan, Vedukholu Dawhuo, Ena Pudiyaningsih, and Tabitha Hashmi gave testimonies about how God had called them to be missionaries in the different countries where they live and about the ministries in which they are involved.

During the decision meeting three new national Baptist women’s organizations were approved. New officers for the next five years were elected, including Preciosa (Precy) Caronongan of the Philippines as ABWU president.

Raquel Contreras and Patsy Davis led in the installation of the new ABWU officers.

For the closing event Baptist women from different countries were dressed in traditional wedding dresses as a reminder to those in attendance that they are the bride of Christ and they are to “be prepared as the pure bride of Christ.”
The Baptist Women’s Union of Latin America (UFBAL) celebrated its 60th Anniversary in the city of Foz del Iguazú in Brazil from November 14-17, 2013. The theme was “In Step with the Spirit,” based on Galatians 5:25.

Roughly 800 women were in attendance, representing 20 national Baptist women’s organizations from 17 countries. Each country’s representative wore national dress and carried their national flag for the opening roll call.

Each day began with a Bible study led by different presenters. The first Bible study was presented by Edmeia Williams from Brazil on “In Step with the Spirit, we always serve.” The second and third Bible studies were led by Alicia Zorzoli from Texas in the United States, with the second study focused on “In Step with the Spirit, I grow in holiness,” and the third on “In Step with the Spirit, I learn to worship God.”

Workshops were available for attendants focusing on violence against women; leadership; evangelization of children using music; and rescuing women from prostitution.

At the decision meeting new officers were elected, including President Sara de Barrios from Venezuela. Three national women’s organizations were received into the membership of UFBAL, one full member and two associate members.

In celebration of the 60th anniversary of UFBAL, a brief history was given by former presidents. The anniversary message was brought by
Women’s Mission Trip to Vietnam

By Patsy Davis

The Baptist World Alliance Women’s Department (BWA WD) organized a mission trip to Vietnam at the invitation of the Baptist Women’s League of the Baptist Churches of Vietnam (BCV) in July 2013. Team members were Sook Jae Lee, president of the Asian Baptist Women’s Union (ABWU); Donna Groover, secretary/treasurer of the BWA WD; and Patsy Davis, executive director of the BWA WD.

Every Saturday morning the Baptist pastors in Ho Chi Min city come together for Bible study and prayer. On this particular Saturday the BWA WD team members shared their testimonies as part of the prayer service.

Approximately 80 women were present at the women’s conference with at least one woman from each region in Vietnam. Each regional representative had an opportunity to share how they are working with Baptist women and reaching out to those who do not know Christ as their Savior. Patsy Davis addressed the conference, emphasizing that women are created in the image of God.

At the end of the conference everyone traveled to a house church for a special celebration. The house church had just received its official government registration documents. In recognition of this achievement there was a worship service celebration.

The BWA WD team met with the women leaders several times during the time in Vietnam, sharing information about ABWU and BWA WD. The officers of the Baptist Women’s League and several other women from Vietnam planned on being at the ABWU Assembly in October 2013 where they were to present the Baptist Women’s League for membership.

On Sunday each team member was invited to preach in three different churches each, for a total of nine churches. This is a normal schedule for many of the pastors in Ho Chi Min city.

Patsy Davis is the executive director of the BWA Women’s Department.

Below: BWA Women’s Department President Raquel Contreras (center) with two representatives from Chile

Above and below: Saturday evening prayer service at Pastor Moses’ church

Approximately 80 women were present at the women’s conference with at least one woman from each region in Vietnam.

Pastor Giam, vice president of the Baptist Churches in Vietnam, holds up the official government registration document for a new house church.

Progressive Evangelicals have received little attention from those studying Protestantism in Brazil. By highlighting this branch of Brazilian Protestantism, Barreto contributes to the understanding of the socio-political relevance of the Evangelical presence in Brazil. Progressive Evangelical Christianity, which combines charismatic spirituality with socio-political progressive action, offers a valuable approach to Christian social ethics in contemporary Brazil that may lead to substantive transformation at both individual and social levels.

The book as a whole presents responses to the plight of the poor, coming from three different faces of Brazilian Protestantism: the ecumenical face, the evangelical face and the Pentecostal face. The guiding argument is that specific responses to realities of suffering, injustice and oppression in Brazil are critically related with one another and are instrumental for the development of a more substantial Brazilian Protestant social ethics in that context.


Heller offers an insightful and excellent guide for those interested in its subject. It brings readers of Erich Geldbech’s Taufe, Ökumenische Studienhefte 5 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen: 1996) up-to-date on the issue it surveys and evaluates.

Noel Vose, Mena: Daughter of Obedience (Crawley, Australia: University of Western Australia Publishing), 2013

Mena presents the story of an extraordinary Roman Catholic woman who comes alive in a well-researched and beautifully written text. How easy it is to overlook examples of religious faith when the holder of that faith is a woman!


From Five Barley Loaves presents the definitive history of Australian Baptist engagement in international mission.

Thomas G. Oey, PhD. Portraits of Baptist Missions in Asia. 2nd Edition (Richmond, Virginia), 2014
I have had the privilege of meeting with emerging leaders all over the world. Frequently the visits happen around a meal or in a room filled with bright eyed, inquisitive, intelligent young people full of curiosity and life. I love listening to them and hearing them talk. I get caught up in their energy and they can be full of it. I get caught up in their seriousness and they can be very serious.

The hardest part for me is seeing how much pressure most of them are under. Many of them are still in school and they are always being tested. They would have big papers to write, presentations to prepare, mid-term exams, final exams. Sometimes they will make light of it but you can see in their faces the exhaustion in their struggle to do well and the depletion of their bodies and minds. A great deal of importance is associated with their tests. It takes a toll on them and I give thanks that I am past all that now.

The only problem is I am not really done with it. No one is really done being tested. What the emerging leaders go through, whether in South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, or North America, is what every human life generally goes through every given day. How am I going to act or react? What do I say or what do I refuse to say? Do I give this or do I withhold that? Where do I let my feelings linger? What do I do when somebody else irritates me? How will I react this time? A problem needs resolving, how do I resolve it? An opportunity presents itself, yes or no? Here is a choice presenting itself between doing the easy thing and doing the right thing, a choice between a good thing and the best thing.

There is a barrage of options that come at us so fast. What continually astounds me is how often those choices become decisive. All these tests and choices pile up. They take a shape that in the end becomes the shape of our character, our identity, our ministry. Our choices, when we are tested, don’t just reveal who we are. They become who we are.

I guess that is why Jesus, after hearing the words, “You are my Son, my beloved, in you I take delight,” was taken to a barren place where he was tested. The story even says it was the Holy Spirit that led him to that terrible place. Isn’t it interesting that God not only refuses to shelter us from tests, but in a sense, may move us toward them? We are not meant for smooth sailing. We are born for challenge and for hard choices to clarify us and to change us and through us to change our world. Emerging leaders seem to understand that more readily than most of us.

I think it is interesting also that the temptations of Jesus are the very ones I face every day. When the devil shows up he always comes as a very fine fellow. He always has a face full of concern. He has sympathetic eyes. His suggestions are that we do something good like feed the hungry. He suggests that through the Kingdom of God we bring everywhere justice, peace, reconciliation, love. He suggests we prove our faithfulness through leaps of faith. Temptations often seem to want to achieve something good.

There are so many voices calling out to us. Of course, we want food for all, we want justice, and we want evidence of God’s faithfulness. That inner voice so often says we can have it and it doesn’t have to cost us all that much. It tries to convince us that all we have to do is just look to our own survival first, take power through any means possible, and conscript God for our own personal goals.

I take courage in knowing that those words spoken to Jesus at his baptism were spoken over our lives at our baptism. “You are my child, beloved, I take delight in you.” That is our identity. Other voices will call it into question; will make us feel as if it cannot be true, will invite us to live as if it is not true. Yet, it is God’s voice and it is truly who we are. It is our identity. Whatever tests you and I may still have to face, in whatever kind of barren place our lives may take us, we hang on to that word. It will get us through. It will grow us up. It will keep us on course.

Emerging Leaders and THEIR TESTS

from the President

JOHN UPTON

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