JESUS CHRIST, BREAD OF LIFE STRATEGY 2010-2015

[It is the eternal will of God to bring men, women, young people and children and all of creation, “all things in heaven and on earth, together under one head, even Christ (Ephesians 1:10)... We affirm our deeply held conviction that if the Gospel is to be clearly heard and experienced as good news, it will be expressed holistically, even as the ministry of Jesus was holistic... We believe in the necessary empowerment of the Holy Spirit in mission for the years to come, the mission of making Jesus known to the glory of God the Father. We therefore commit ourselves afresh to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit (Swanwick Declaration 8 & 23).

In the Swanwick Declaration, Baptists give expression to the need to reach the world for Christ through proclamation in preaching, prophetic witness and service:

A foretaste of the fullness of life always requires reconciliation with God but also necessitates the redemption and transformation of the social, political, economic and moral frameworks that shape our world and either enhance or destroy the lives given us by God (Swanwick Declaration 8).

The purpose of the Bread of Life conferences is to mobilize Baptists at the local level to:

- participate in a process to renew their understanding of the mission God in Christ has committed to the church;
- stimulate the desire to bear witness to the multiple dimensions of the church’s missional calling in the churches’ particular context;
- Facilitate the sharing of stories on effective evangelistic engagement in the local area.

The Bread of Life conferences will mobilize the churches around hearing what the Spirit is saying about their mission faithfulness. The conferences will be organized and managed by METR and will be led by the METR Director working in cooperation with BWA member bodies to ensure effective implementation.

THEME

Participants of the 20th World Baptist Congress assembled under the theme, “Hear the Spirit!” They desired to hear from God “so as to gain the guidance we need as we go forward in faith. In the face of post-modernism, secularism, and rampant idolatry, we seek God’s face, for we need to discern new ways to carry the unchanging Gospel to our changing world” (BWA General Secretary Neville Callam, “Welcome to Hawaii” message).

The main concern of the ministry of the BWA over the period 2010-2015 will be to motivate churches to keep In Step with the Spirit. Over the period, METR will stimulate the churches in their effort to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying about the way they understand and carry out the mission committed to the church with special emphasis on evangelism and service.
VALUES

METR aims to honor the following values during the Bread of Life conferences:

1. **Seeking God’s glory**: Every event will honor and glorify God by offering our best gifts to the renewal process.
2. **Maintaining Christ Centeredness**: All our work must aim at drawing people into a deeper personal experience of the lordship of Christ.
3. **Listening to the Holy Spirit**: Bread of Life conferences will seek to be attuned to what the Spirit is saying to the church today and to be ready to be equipped by the Spirit for the challenges discerned.
4. **Following a holistic agenda**: The call to mission is all-encompassing. It requires the church to apply the values of Christ’s kingdom to all aspects of existence. Bread of Life conferences will promote commitment to holistic mission.
5. **Learning in the context of community**: Bread of Life conferences will promote among participants the spirit of sharing of resources of learning by drawing upon the experiences of all involved and by focusing on context-specific answers to the challenges faced by the church in fulfilling God’s mission committed to it.

PRIORITIES

Priorities for the Bread of Life conferences are as follows:

- Promote the biblical mandate of evangelism through training events and resources
- Conduct events for renewal in mission understanding in the various regions of the BWA
- Suggest literature that provides the churches with a biblical and theological foundation for the church’s mission and evangelism
- Urge Baptists around the world to pray regularly for spiritual renewal and a greater commitment to evangelism especially within the Baptist family

PROCEDURES

The METR director will address the following:

- On the basis of study of the venues of Living Water Conferences, the list of requests for conferences which were not satisfied, and an examination of situations of need, develop a list of locations for Bread of Life conferences
- In the case of each agreed venue, consult with the appropriate persons in the meeting area to make preparation for, and conduct, the Bread of Life conferences
- Ensure that each Bread of Life event is held within the budget allocated. He may supplement the income by setting an appropriate registration fee for attendees
- Conduct research to monitor how follow-up plans developed at the conferences are being implemented
- Encourage seminaries and Bible schools in the regions to evaluate their curricula to ensure adequate attention to mission and evangelism
EVENTS
Some of the major emphases of the Bread of Life conferences will include:

1. Use of the official local language in order to allow for full participation of local Baptists and guests

2. Close cooperation and partnership with local Baptist churches and leadership

3. Study of the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of individual Christians and the local church and its mission so that believers may be empowered for Christian witness.

4. A daily program which will be planned around three accents:

   - Intentionality: each event is to be intentional in its purpose and goals
   - Progression: the content of the program to be developed and/or structured around four areas:
     - Awareness of the state of the church’s witness: what has been done
     - Awareness of the biblical mandate: what is God calling us to do
     - Methodology: how to fulfil the call
     - Declaration of the intent: identifying the next steps toward faithfulness in mission and service
   - Interaction: A combination of devotional exercises and considered papers dealing theologically with the issues identified with ample time set aside for discussion;

5. An intentional effort to engage the gifts of national and regional leaders as convenors and presenters as suggested by the Local Arrangement Committee. This is supplemented by participation of leaders drawn from within the wider BWA constituency;

6. An effort to ensure that youth, men and women are included as participants and presenters;

7. Encouragement in the preparation, production and use of suitable indigenous literature on mission and evangelism;

8. Training to enable local Baptists to carry out God’s mission through projects that reflect a proper regard for indigenization;

9. Promotion of the need for appropriate deliberate and planned follow-up efforts in the local associations/conventions/unions and the wider region;

CONCLUSION

The Baptist World Alliance has assigned the Division on Mission, Evangelism & Theological Reflection the task of being a space for common theological reflection on, and engagement in, ecclesiological and missiological challenges facing local Baptist churches affiliated with its member bodies.

Taking John 6.35 as the focus passage, the “Jesus Christ, Bread of Life” Strategy 2010-2015 is a natural outgrowth of and a major medium for the fulfilment of this assignment.
It is based on three major pillars:

- The *empowerment of the Holy Spirit* in line with the BWA overall theme for this quinquennium “*In Step with the Spirit*”

- The *awareness of the evangelistic mandate* of local Baptist churches

- The *renewed emphasis on the holistic mission* of local Baptist churches

To this end all BWA member bodies and their cooperating churches are being summoned to a new thrust in Mission and Evangelism during this quinquennium as they boldly proclaim the invitation our Lord issues to all people everywhere to come and feast from His Table in glory!