



Your network to the world!®

BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE

405 North Washington Street | Falls Church, VA 22046, USA

+1-703-790-8980 TEL | +1-703-893-5160 FAX | bwa@bwanet.org | www.bwanet.org

Letter to the Churches 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Triune Lord from the Division on Mission, Evangelism and Justice of the Baptist World Alliance! I am very happy to share the good things which took place in Bangkok, Thailand, earlier this year during our Annual Gathering. All sixteen commissions met during the Annual Gathering and we were also fortunate to host a special forum on baptism led by Dr. Anthony R. Cross, a Baptist theologian from Great Britain.

We were warmly welcomed by our Thai brothers and sisters. Their hospitality was extremely generous. Our corporate times of worship and reflection were meaningful and helpful as we went about the work of the BWA. We also honored our retiring General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Neville Callam, and voted on and commissioned the new incoming General Secretary, Dr. Elijah M. Brown (he will begin January 1, 2018).

Each commission shared times of intellectual stimulation as well as reflection and challenges for the people of God today. A number of commissions heard from Baptists in Asia while some visited local ministry sites in the city of Bangkok. Each presentation reflected a specific locale while still offering something for the universal Body of Christ to consider.

In the following pages you will find brief notions presented by the commissions along with a possible action item for you to consider. We would appreciate your feedback and ideas as you read these entries. Your responses provide opportunities for the commissions to broaden their perspectives and their ideas for the future. Our Global Baptist Family needs each other so we might grow more deeply in order to help usher in the Kingdom of God, through *Jesus Christ, the Door*, here on earth as it is in heaven.

Joy and Grace,

Trisha Miller Manarin, Coordinator
Division on Mission Evangelism and Justice
Baptist World Alliance
mej@bwanet.org



The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it Psalm 24:1

The **Commission on Creation Care** visited an eco-cultural organic farm and tourist center in addition to hearing from presenters on the beauty of God's creation. How can you work with Christian and non-Christian groups while caring for creation?

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Ephesians 6:18



The **Commission on Human Rights Advocacy** learned of the Human Rights violations and the persecution of Christians in some countries in Asia and Africa. Please pray for those who are persecuted that their faith might increase and that their rights might not be ignored.



The tongue of the wise brings healing. Proverbs 12:18b
The **Commission on Interfaith Relations** heard from a number of people from various parts of Asia and

beyond. A key to building community with non-Christians is to form friendships with those of other faiths or no faith. Consider how you are befriending someone from a different faith. What can you do to begin a friendly conversation?

Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Psalm 16:24

The **Commission on Peace and Reconciliation** learned about issues related to marijuana use in Jamaica and Zambia and explored Non-Violent



Communication and the power of words. Reflect on the words you use. Consider what they are telling others. How can you

become a communicator of peace?

For why should my liberty be subject to the judgment of someone else's conscience?

I Corinthians 10:29b

The **Commission on Religious Liberty** heard from sisters and



brothers in Asia who have faced a variety of religious liberty infractions, as well as reports from Iraq and Nigeria. They are eager for all Baptists to engage in issues of religious liberty and believe we must take a firm stand for religious liberty for all, no matter who we are or what our station in life is.



With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Acts 4:33

The **Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity** heard wonderful presentations on the Baptist witness in Thailand and Myanmar, including indigenous ministries and missionary efforts. The commission is working on a resource to include the histories of member bodies across the world. Do you know about the history of Baptists in your country?

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

I Timothy 4:12

The **Commission on Christian Education/Nurture** spent



their time working on two projects: helping youth feel welcome and a part of today's church and helping youth develop values and purpose based on Scripture. They plan to offer some concrete resources reflecting upon these concerns. How do you engage with youth in your community?



Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Psalm 19:14

The **Commission on Christian Ethics** heard a variety of presentations on Christian spiritual maturity, including inner spirituality, social justice and creating community. They hope to create a resource to assist groups and individuals to explore the question of “How should one/does one practice or deepen/your faith?” What are some ways you deepen your faith?

In him we live and move and have our being.

Acts 17:28a



The **Commission on**

Baptist Identity and Christian Unity continued to explore Baptist saints, including Ron Ham from Australia and Sam Sharpe from Jamaica. Additionally, they delved into the importance of bi-lateral dialogues with other Christian World Communions. They will create a study guide to assist churches to better understand the conversations taking place in the broader Christian world. Where do you and your



Christian (non-Baptist) friends connect?

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send

you.” John 20:21

The **Commission on Evangelism** engaged in two very interesting presentations: Rastafarianism and Gospel Engagement, and Buddhism and Gospel Engagement. Both provided good information to assist every day people in their encounters with these two groups. We hope to provide these points of engagement on the BWA website in the future. How are you sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ?



And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I

tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Matthew 25:40

The **Commission on Ministry** received five presentations looking at the role of the church today and the need for a systematic strategy to bring long term impact at the grassroots level. The commission hopes to compile a list of important recommendations to be made available at next year’s Annual Gathering and published on the BWA website. What ministry do you see impacting your community?

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13



The **Commission on Theological Education**

offered three different panels exploring theological education in the Asia Pacific Region, how to deliver quality theological education in a more effective and less costly way and contextualization of theological education: secularity and religion in public school. Beginning conversations have ignited a deeper interest in creating partnerships and cross-cultural engagements among theological institutions.



God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24

The **Commission on Baptist Worship and Spirituality** had three powerful presentations (constructing a spirituality for the dislocated, trails of the Spirit in the Asia Pacific region and worship and work of the Holy Spirit in a suspended convention) cradled in special worship experiences created around the theme of the presentations and engaging all present. The commission members experienced various cultural aspects of worship through song, responsive readings and silence; they were also challenged to consider the work of the Holy



Spirit and God's presence in big and small things. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit lately?

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. Isaiah 9:2

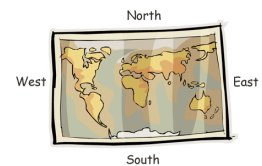
The **Commission on Racial and Gender Justice** experienced a guided tour to NightLight, which was founded by American Baptist missionary Annie Dieselberg. It is a ministry to people working in prostitution and is a multi-pronged ministry involving Christian outreach into bars, a business making jewelry and t-shirts to offer alternative employment to the women, a coffee shop, a drop-in center, a bakery business, a church started for the women and other marginalized people and help repatriating trafficked women back to their homes in Africa and Central Asia. It was an inspirational and



challenging visit. Who, in your community, is ministering to prostitutes?

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free... Luke 4:18

The **Commission on Social and Economic Justice** met with two key priorities this year. The first priority was to better understand the social and economic ramifications surrounding the issue of slavery and human trafficking in our world today and how Baptists can be better resourced in combating this insidious issue. Secondly, the commission recommended to the General Council an up-to-date and all encompassing resolution about modern slavery and the response the Baptist family of churches around the world should consider. It was a delight to see both of these priorities achieved and on Friday, July 7, the Human Slavery and Trafficking resolution was adopted. The commission is committed to exploring more ways to respond to injustice and engage local churches. How is your church engaged to bring an end to modern day slavery?



But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ... the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor. John 4:35b-38

The **Commission on Mission** explored the notion of receiving and receptivity. Commission members were challenged to consider becoming receivers as mission activity shifts "from West to East" to "from everywhere to everywhere." They also examined a variety of perspectives regarding cultural and individual

receptivity and the response of the missionary.
How are we cultivating “a field by watering and
sowing and creating a receptive culture?”