



Nashville, Tennessee  
Associated  
Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen  
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626  
Fax: 904.262.7745  
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

January 11, 2000

(00-03)

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- International Baptist gathering emphasizes justice, evangelism**
- Newly elected BWA president emphasizes centrality of prayer**
- Baptists in Bangladesh claim neglect by SBC missionaries**
- Pioneer Baptist journalist C.E. Bryant dead at 82**
- Church outing turns deadly for 3 New Mexico seniors**

**International Baptist gathering  
emphasizes justice, evangelism**

By Robert O'Brien

MELBOURNE, Australia (ABP) -- Baptists worldwide declared a "Decade of Racial Justice" and a new emphasis on evangelism amid color and pageantry at the 18th Baptist World Congress, Jan. 5-9.

A resolution on racial justice at the gathering in Melbourne, Australia, called on Baptists everywhere to seek "inter-racial and inter-ethnic harmony to achieve authentic justice for all persons without regard to race."

In other business, Baptist leaders voted to establish a summit over the next five years to consider the challenge of evangelization in the 21st century. Emphasis will be given to newer churches in Africa and Asia and an estimated 1.3 billion people living in portions of the globe that are largely untouched by the gospel.

Congress delegates elected South Korean pastor and broadcaster Billy Kim to a five-year term as 19th president of the Baptist World Alliance. Kim, 64, is pastor of the 13,000-member Central Baptist Church in Suwon, South Korea. He will succeed Brazilian pastor Nilson Fanini as president in July at a meeting of the BWA General Council in Cuba.

Some 6,100 delegates from six continents -- representing about 80 percent of the world's Baptists -- examined the congress theme: "Jesus Christ Forever. Yes." They also launched initiatives to minister to the poor and hungry, emphasize prayer, encourage strife-torn people and promote social justice.

"The gospel of Jesus is an invitation" both to salvation and to a moral vision to minister to the needs of suffering people, African-American pastor H. Beecher Hicks Jr., told 7,000 people on opening night.

"We're not here for a theological tea party," said Hicks, pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. "Say 'yes' to the invitation," he admonished, eliciting a litany response of "yes" repeated several times in more than a dozen languages.

In other business, the world's Baptist community honored a Burmese man known simply as "Rev. Simon" with a prestigious award. He was a college professor who voluntarily became a refugee in 1985 to join his fellow Karen people as a minister and teacher after the Burmese military drove them into Thailand.

Rev. Simon received the second BWA Human Rights Award in absentia. He was unable to attend because the governments of Burma (now called Myanmar) and Thailand refused him visas despite pleas by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, winner of the first award.

Congress participants also passed resolutions calling for action on human rights and social justice, faith and hope for the new millennium and Christian renewal, growth, evangelism and mission.

Formed in 1905, the Baptist World Alliance consists of 196 member bodies, representing 43 million Baptists in 160,000 churches. The organization holds a congress every five years.

Looking toward the 100th anniversary of the BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz urged a 21st Century Committee to "examine achievements of the past, the present success and future possibilities" of the BWA.

That committee will bring recommendations for changes and emphases to the Centennial Baptist World Congress in England in 2005.

Christians enter a new millennium divided, said Lotz, who has administered the McLean, Va., -based BWA since 1988. "Division between Catholic, Orthodox, ecumenical and evangelical Christians is in some cases worse than at the beginning of the 20th century," he said. "Baptists must work for the unity of God's people."

The congress marked the first major international church assembly in the year 2000. The gathering is usually held in July but this time met in January to take advantage of the Australian summer. Organizers speculated that holiday-related travel and Y2K concerns contributed to a drop in attendance. More than 8,000 registered for the previous congress, July 1995 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In elections in satellite meetings, Audrey Morikawa of Canada succeeded Mercy Jeyarajao of India as president of the BWA Women's Department, and Samson Ola Olaniyan of Nigeria succeeded Angel Baez of Paraguay as Men's Department president.

Baptists of all stripes found unity in worship, fellowship and colorful pageantry throughout the congress. The pageantry ranged from an opening parade of flags and dramatization by Australian aborigines to an International Festival of music, movement, food and testimony outside the Melbourne Exhibition Centre.

Congress speakers and group leaders emphasized multiculturalism in urging Baptists "to seek the mind of Christ" and minister in unity to spiritual and physical needs.

"Real light is the most effective in the dark places [of the world], and the church is at its best when it recognizes the link between salvation and liberation" from oppression and suffering, said group session leader Frederick Haynes, pastor of Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas.

Sessions also addressed hunger, disease and poverty as dramatic issues facing the 21st century.

"The world's 358 billionaires are wealthier than the combined annual income of countries with 45 percent of the world's population," said Tim Costello, president of the Baptist Union of Australia. "This is in a world where thousands of kids die each week from preventable diseases."

Jesus is the Lord of new beginnings, so he is the Lord for the new millennium, Anne Graham Lotz told 8,000 persons at the closing session.

"God's vision for the future is Jesus," said Lotz, noted Bible, teacher, preacher and author from Raleigh, N.C. She is daughter of evangelist Billy Graham and sister-in-law of Denton Lotz.

Both Fanini and Kim, known for their evangelistic preaching, said if they had it to do over they would do more praying.

"Lack of prayer is one of the evidences of lack of spiritual power in our lives," Kim said. "There should be no 'day off' when it comes to prayer."

"Much prayer, much power," Fanini said in addressing one solution to complex problems. "Little prayer, little power."

The prayer and presence of world Baptists brought comfort to congress delegates from parts of the world in deadly conflict, such as Indonesia and Lebanon.

Ingrid Subagyo of Indonesia sought prayers of support from members of the Asian Baptist Federation at a luncheon. She said that while Baptist and other churches are still being burned in Indonesia, "the Lord has called us to this life at this time and all Baptists to stand with us."

Subagyo said militants have burned down some 700 churches in Indonesia, and shot believers in front of their churches. She also said militants destroyed a Christian seminary in Jakarta.

Through it all, she said, Indonesian Baptists have continued to witness for Jesus Christ and to work with Baptist refugees who were forced to flee from their homes in East Timor, a three-day boat trip from Jakarta.

Lebanese Baptist pastor Charles Costa of the Ras Beirut Baptist Church attended the opening congress session feeling alone and grief-stricken that he could not return home to perform a Jan. 5 funeral service for two of his church members killed in civil war.

Muslim militants reportedly shot and mutilated Selwa Raad and her pregnant daughter, Sarah Yazbeck, and wounded Sarah's husband, Jean Yazbeck, on Jan. 3.

-30-

## **Newly elected BWA president emphasizes centrality of prayer**

By Jack Hillhouse and Robert O'Brien

MELBOURNE, Australia (ABP) -- The newly elected president of the Baptist World Alliance offered three words of advice to Baptists around the world.

"Prayer is my first advice," said South Korean pastor and broadcaster Billy Kim. "Prayer is my second suggestion. And prayer is my third suggestion."

Kim, 64, is pastor of Central Baptist Church in Suwon, South Korea. He was elected Jan. 8 to a five-year presidential term, which begins in July, by delegates to the 18th Baptist World Congress in Melbourne, Australia.

Denton Lotz, general secretary of the BWA, told reporters that Kim gets up at 4 a.m. every day to participate in a 5 a.m. prayer meeting at his church.

Kim, who has been pastor of the 13,000-member Suwon church 40 years, said he wishes he had learned about the centrality of prayer earlier in his ministry.

"If I had it all to do over, I would do more praying and less preaching," Kim said in a sermon to 6,100 delegates from around the world.

Kim said pastors without a strong prayer life will falter in their ministry. "Lack of prayer is one of the evidences of a lack of spiritual power in our lives," he said. "There should be no 'day off' when it comes to prayer."

"Prayer changes the life of the church," Kim added at a press conference. "I wasn't taught that in the American seminary. But corporate and individual prayer is essential."

Other priorities cited by the new BWA president included global evangelization, concern for individuals in problem areas around the world and help for underdeveloped nations.

"The Coca-Cola Company has a goal and motto that it wants six billion people to taste its soft drink," Kim said at a news conference after his election to succeed Brazilian Pastor Nilson Fanini.

"We Baptists have Living Water we can offer the world's people, and I want the entire world to taste that Living Water," Kim said, alluding to a metaphor for Jesus Christ from the Book of John.

Kim asked Baptists to pray about the division between North and South Korea.

With people fleeing North Korea into China, Kim said he looks forward to ongoing BWA work to help with needs in North Korea as well as other trouble spots around the world.

The BWA has ties to North Korea that were developed by Hungarian Baptists. Lotz said BWA has channeled medical supplies into North Korea from Hungary through Beijing. The Hungarian ambassador to North Korea, though not a Baptist, assisted the BWA aid efforts. Humanitarian and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter was the first person allowed to fly from Seoul to Pyongyang in recent times, Lotz said.

Besides his 40-year pastorate at the Suwon church, Kim is president of the Far East Broadcasting Company-Korea, director of Christian Service Inc., Korea, and chaplain of the Korean National Police.

He is also founder of Suwon Central Christian Academy and Capital Bible College and Seminary in Korea and formerly was director of Youth for Christ, Korea, a BWA vice president and president of the Asian Baptist Federation.

In 1993, Kim translated for Billy Graham in a crusade in which more than 1.1 million people attended a single service.

-30-

## **Baptists in Bangladesh claim neglect by SBC missionaries**

MELBOURNE, Australia (ABP) -- Two delegates from Bangladesh surprised a Jan. 8 meeting of the Baptist World Alliance General Council by asking the group to take up slack because, they said, new strategies by Southern Baptist missionaries neglect existing churches.

Dilip Datta did not mention the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention by name when he complained about a missions society "dumping its institutions on us."

Bangladesh Baptists were not trained to manage hospitals and other institutions, Datta said. "That is why we are turning to you," he said at the meeting in Melbourne, Australia. "We need your help to train us to run the institutions for which we are now responsible."

Samson Chowdhury, a member of the General Council from Bangladesh, was more explicit in his response to Datta. He said Southern Baptist missionaries played a major role in helping Baptists in the country grow from 17 churches to nearly 500 in 18 years.

"Now the missionaries have a new vision, but we do not know what that vision is," Chowdhury continued.

Chowdhury claimed missionaries were withdrawing from working with the Baptist Christians of his country and focusing instead on unreached people groups. "The missionaries believe that to reach Muslims they have to grow beards, look like Muslims and act like Muslims," he said. "They do not want to identify with the churches."

BWA President Nilson Fanini referred Datta's request that the group begin a "capacity building" program to an executive committee. General Secretary Denton Lotz asked a group of missions executives, which includes IMB President Jerry Rankin, to also discuss the issue.

After the meeting, a high-ranking IMB official said he was surprised the issue came up in the General Council meeting but that other groups of Baptists have expressed similar feelings.

Avery Willis, senior vice president for overseas operations, said he and Rankin plan to visit national Baptist leaders during the coming year.

"We want them to know that we are not abandoning them," Willis said. "We want to maintain relationships."

In other action, the council approved financing of \$3.3 million for new BWA offices. The BWA hopes to sell the present property in McLean, Va., for \$2 million and raise the additional \$1.3 million. The new property is located nearby in Falls Church, Va.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

### **Pioneer Baptist journalist C.E. Bryant dead at 82**

BELLEVILLE, Ill. (ABP) -- C.E. Bryant, a pioneer in Baptist corporate communications, died Jan. 7 in Belleville, Ill.

Bryant, 82, served two years as the first director of the Southern Baptist Convention's news service, Baptist Press, after its founding in 1946. He also was first director of communications for the Baptist World Alliance, a job he held 25 years before retiring in 1982.

Former colleagues said Bryant demonstrated that professional journalism training could be used in the work of the church.

"C.E. Bryant was a trailblazer for modern-day Baptist journalists," said Bob Terry, editor of The Alabama Baptist news journal and executive secretary of the Association of State Baptist Papers.

W.C. Fields, director of Baptist Press from 1959 to 1987 called Bryant "one of the finest journalists that Southern Baptists have had over these many years."

Bryant had been hospitalized 10 days with the flu and pneumonia, according to a family friend.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

### **Church outing turns deadly for 3 New Mexico seniors**

By John Loudat

ALAMOGORDO, N.M. (ABP) -- A tractor-trailer rig rear-ended a church van carrying senior adults to a funeral in New Mexico Jan. 8, killing three of the van's occupants and injuring the other nine.

The deadly crash took place just outside the tiny town of Tinnie, N.M., 40 miles west of Roswell, on a winding section of U.S. 70.

The van carried 11 members of First Baptist Church of Alamogordo and one non-member on their way to a graveside service at the town cemetery. The funeral was for the stepson of another member of the church's senior-adult department.

As the van began a left turn into the cemetery at about 11:15 a.m., a tractor-trailer rig carrying 40,000 pounds of lettuce struck it from behind. After impact, the Dodge van traveled more than 500 feet through two barbed-wire fences before landing upright in a field.

Three passengers in the van's rear seat died at the scene. They were 70-year-old Emmet Carson, who worked as the church's senior-adult minister, and two other church members: Flo Otto, 72, and Vera Wagner, 76.

The other passengers, including the driver, the church's 48-year-old minister of education, Garland Peek, were hospitalized. One, Barbara Hanna, 73, was in critical condition.

The driver of the truck, Bruce Miller, 45, was unhurt. A police report said any citations stemming from the crash were pending.

Bill Jones, pastor of First Baptist Church in Tinnie, said he learned about the crash when he arrived at the cemetery about a half-mile from the church to conduct graveside services scheduled at noon. He waited with mourners inside the cemetery while emergency personnel, including four of his parishioners, cared for the injured across the highway. They proceeded with the service when the last ambulances left, about 1 p.m., he said.

Word of the accident spread quickly across the state as the media immediately converged on scene.

Fellow Baptists in New Mexico wasted no time responding in ministry.

Ministers rushed to hospitals in Ruidoso, about 30 miles away, and Roswell to minister to victims and family members as they arrived.

Eight members of First Baptist Church in Ruidoso showed up at the hospital to help in whatever ways they could, said Pastor Tim Gilliland.

One drove one of the injured back home to Alamogordo, Gilliland said. Others offered food and lodging for families. There were no takers, he said, since Alamogordo is only 45 minutes away.

First Baptist Church in Roswell also offered food and accommodations for family members. Pastor Bobby Renfro said state police told him that they were so impressed with the church's response to the situation, they saw no need to call in any other crisis personnel.

Phones at the church in Alamogordo soon were ringing off the hooks. Church members Bart and Sharon Montgomery were among volunteers who pitched in to help the staff field calls.

Bart Montgomery, who is director of missions for Mountain Valley Baptist Association, visited Carson's widow and called Albuquerque pastor Bob Butler, asking him to break the news to the other victims' families.

Butler, pastor of Sandia Baptist Church, is former pastor of the Alamogordo congregation who moved to Albuquerque in 1995. He said he conducted funeral services for both dead women's husbands while he was there.

The 10 p.m. newscasts on most New Mexicans' televisions that night opened with scenes of a prayer vigil held at the Alamogordo church three hours earlier.

After the service, Montgomery said the church had already begun to rally around and help one another.

"The church will do well," he predicted, expressing his and his church's appreciation for the deluge of calls from all over the state that day.

"It is obvious that (First Baptist, Alamogordo) is a loving, close-knit family," said Gilliland. He said that he witnessed on the part of the 25-30 Alamogordo church members who came to Ruidoso "a sweet spirit in the midst of a horrible situation."

"In 30 years of ministry, I've never seen anything like this," said Richard Smith, interim pastor at First Baptist Church in Alamogordo.

The morning after the accident, Smith preached a sermon titled "O Come Let Us Worship," based on Psalm 95. He said he hoped to lead the stunned church family to focus on God's help rather than why the tragedy occurred.

Smith, too, expressed gratitude for all who were praying for the church and asked that they continue, "that we might be able to seek the Lord's will in all of this and that the Lord will bring victory out of tragedy."

"All New Mexico Baptists grieve with our brothers and sisters at First Church, Alamogordo," said the Baptist Convention of New Mexico's executive director, Claude Cone, the day after the accident.

"It is time for us to truly pray for one another and bear one another's burdens," Cone said. "We will all be looking to our loving Father to bring good out of the bad."

A combined funeral service for Carson, Otto and Wagner was scheduled Jan. 13 at First Baptist Church in Alamogordo.

-30-

**END**

---