

# HIGHLIGHTS

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Jimmy Martin

**God's  
Global Glory**

Body Building

**Growing  
Healthy Churches**

ACM

**IBC Welcomes  
Three Churches**

# God's Global Glory

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*"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).*

*I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp" (Rev 21:22-23).*

■ **Old Testament prophets** lead us to recognize the chief aim of history and the ultimate goal of our ministry and witness: God's global glory. This same theme of Habakkuk's prophecy and prayer is uttered numerous times in Scripture.

What is glory? In Scripture it refers to the essential worth, beauty, and value of people, created things, and, of course, the Creator himself. The Hebrew word means *weight, substance*, and also *brilliance or radiant beauty*. To glorify someone is to recognize their intrinsic worth and beauty and to speak about it in a public way.

Here, Habakkuk uses the term "glory" in the sense of powerful presence. He says that all the earth would be filled with the knowledge of the manifest presence, the glory, of God. If the glory of the Lord reveals God's person and dignity, the proper response to such a revelation is to give God honor or glory. God's presence is not to be seen or experienced only in a place of worship. The prophet calls for more – His glory should be recognized as filling the earth, letting all the people of the world experience and respond to God's clear, heavy presence. The word *awesome*, used in its original sense, is appropriate here.

In the New Testament, we see that the glory of God is not only to be seen in clouds or fire or holy smoke. The glory of God is most clearly seen in the work of Christ our Lord, who came into the world to make God known in the most unique way possible. In his Gospel, John put it clearly and beautifully: *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14).

God's glory: his awesome, powerful presence, his weight, substance, radiant brilliance and beauty is seen in our Lord, who was full of grace and truth. To know Him is to have a personal knowledge of the glory of the Lord. In Christ, God's glory was made visible. God's glory is not only awesome and powerful and radiant. It is made even more beautiful when we consider the image of glory that Christ brought to earth – His humility and compassion for those who were anything BUT glorious, to those who were inglorious. This glory of God comes to us in a way that we can understand, in a package that looked average on the surface – glory with a human face.

Now let us take the idea of glory one step further. Amazingly, Paul writes in Colossians that it is in the church, made up of Jews and Gentiles,

that God chose to reveal a great truth that was hidden for ages and generations until the day of Paul; it was a mystery. Paul says that he wanted to *"make known the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."* Paul is making it clear that the glory of God that came to the world in the person of Jesus Christ is today alive and well and present in power and brilliance and compassion in an ever-increasing way in God's people, the Church.

Can we see it? It is in and through His people that God is communicating his wonderful message of the Kingdom of His glory in a totally contextualized, down-to-earth, understandable way. He does it in each local community of Christ-followers, large or small, in every place on earth where they are, as they exercise the gifts of the Spirit and function in each place as the body of Christ.

Wolfgang Simson calls the church "the Shopping Window of God." The church allows the world to literally see the Body of Christ, where His glory is revealed in the most practical of all terms – hands-on, down-to-earth, right next door, unable to overlook or ignore living every day among us. It is no wonder the Apostle Paul devoted his time and energy to planting, establishing, and strengthening local churches – communities that made the Risen Christ incarnate, within easy access of every person of every class, kind, and condition in the world. In so doing, God's glory would be made known in all the earth. We are called to be the Glory-Bearers.

God is entrusting not only His glorious message of the Gospel, but His glory itself to us. In our lives, in the deeds and words of our churches, God's glory is being revealed. God is calling on the world to bring Him glory, and we are the light-bearers of His brilliance, the carriers of His glory. Jesus said, *"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matt 5:16).

When we see our role as glory-bearers, we come to understand that we, as the IBC, are more than just small pockets of believers called to provide a "home away from home" for international expatriates. Rather, we are commissioned, commanded by God to bring His glory to the communities and the great cities, with a view that they would see our lives and deeds and glorify our Father in heaven. We are to spread the fire of God's glory!

## HIGHLIGHTS

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A bystander asked three men who were working on a construction project, "What are you doing?" One answered, "I am building a door." The second, "I am building a wall." The third saw the big picture: "I am building a great cathedral for the glory of God!" It is easy, in the daily grind of life and ministry, to lose sight of our mission. It is also easy for us as a small family of churches to forget that we are here to play a role in the great purpose of history – that the knowledge of the glory of God would fill the earth.

God's global glory can be seen in microcosm each time a church builds bridges of reconciliation and breaks down barriers of prejudice or nationalism or pride of any kind to present to God multicultural worship and witness. All that we do together as a family of churches – witness, ministry, missions, training, and fellowship – should contribute to the goal of exalting Him and making His name and glory known on earth. The local church is called to lead the way in Gospel transformation. I see our cooperation to be a beautiful expression of the fact that we belong to each other because we belong to Christ and a foretaste of the global glory that will one day fill heaven and earth.

We long for the day when it can truly be said that the earth is full of the glory of the Lord. John describes the scene of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 – the day when there is no need of sun or moon because God's glory is its light and the Lamb is its lamp. We are to live each day in light of that day. Until then, we are to work to bring the glory of God to our world.

As we work with other Christ-followers around the world, seeking to bring the presence of Christ in every place in the form of a gathered body of believers, we are spreading the knowledge of the glory of God. It is for this very purpose that we are sent. We are not just preaching sermons, teaching Bible classes, praying with downcast disciples, counseling families, or managing conflict. We are opening people's eyes to the glory of God! And with the goal that they in turn will know that glory and ascribe to the only One who is truly glorious, that the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

We who know Christ know something of the glory of God in a personal, experiential way. When we are filled with the Spirit, we know it in a powerful way. Liberal theology will certainly snuff out the glory in our lives and churches. An equal danger is dead orthodoxy. Like a cemetery, we can be organized, positioned properly, and labeled correctly; yet like Ezekiel's dry, bleached bones, we can be dead and useless. Disunity in a church blurs the glory of God. Sin in a church hinders the glory of God from shining as it should. But a church, committed to God's Word and practicing love inside and outside the church, opens the windows of glory to a watching world.

Let us plan and work and pray for the planting of new churches. Let us plan and work and pray for the strengthening of our churches. But let our planning and praying and working start with personal revival – a revival of the glory of God in our lives. Then we

will have not only a message to proclaim, but a Person – living, radiant, worthy. May God give us a glow that illuminates His worth. Join with me in praying daily the prayer of Moses, "Show me your glory" (Ex 33:18). ■



*Jimmy Martin*

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# Growing Healthy Churches

BY ERIK NIELSEN, IBC PRESIDENT AND PASTOR OF FIRST INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

■ **Fellow pastors** and messengers of the churches of the International Baptist Convention, I am honored that you elected me last year as your Vice President, knowing full well that I would become your President this year.

When your Executive Sub-Council agreed to ask John James to speak at our Annual Convention Meeting this year, your Past President and I agreed that our theme should be "Growing Healthy Churches." Our concern for the convention is that it remains a healthy and growing convention. But we realize that the

age our members to see it as an opportunity to share the Gospel with those who wouldn't normally come to church. We usually have 30-35 singers, but we were as many as 43 for Easter this year. So, I thought I was exercising faith when I ordered 45 songbooks for our Christmas choir. But, last Sunday I had to place another order for 15 more! And, in what I would say is an even more exciting sign, I got an unusual amount of praise for my message last Sunday, in which I was very heavy with doctrine, and rather limited with application, all on the subject of Christ's person and nature.

But, regretfully, we have also seen people, even our leaders, fall into sinful behavior; people who attend a few times and then never return; people who once were active in ministry but simply drop off the radar and are never pursued; and people who are in the pews most Sundays but never actively serving.

So, what can we say are some of the signs that the church is healthy? If a doctor were to check your physical health, he or she will likely take the usual readings of your pulse, blood pressure, height and weight; check your eyes and ears and listen to your chest; check your reflexes; and, if you are male, he or she will ask you to cough! But can you look at the numerical growth of a church and the ministries it conducts and the finances it handles and safely say that the church is healthy?

I took a quick look at Paul's teaching on the body of Christ in Romans 12, and I believe we can safely conclude from his instructions there, that healthy churches consist (at least) of:

- members who don't think more highly of themselves than they ought but know they belong to one another
- members who use the gifts of grace they have been given
- members who love each other sincerely and are devoted to one another
- members who honor other members above themselves
- members who zealously keep their spiritual fervor as they serve the Lord
- members who share with God's people who are in need and practice hospitality

Isn't it sadly true that church rifts, quarrels, dissensions, and factions occur when church members have selfish ambitions instead of selfless love? That the needy get ignored when church members are more

devoted to themselves than each other? That people get sidetracked when church members are zealous for their reputations instead of for serving the Lord?

But, how can we measure our Body's health by those qualities? Can you measure *the weight of honor* a person can safely attribute to himself that isn't "more highly than they ought"? Is there a *percent of dependence* that proves a member sees herself as part of a body? How do you *measure sincerity*? Is there a *volume of zeal* which is enough to keep one's spiritual fervor? Is there a number of nights a family must fill their guestroom or feed a neighbor to demonstrate they are *hospitable*?

Maybe there aren't any quantitative measurements to measure the health of our churches. But even if we can't determine a measure to reach, *we can always encourage more of each of those qualities in our members.* We may never reach a particular measure of health, but we can always try to be healthier than we were before. So, maybe the real question we should be asking ourselves, whether we are pastors, ministry leaders, or members, is "How can I encourage my church members to be the kind of members Paul instructs us here to be?" Of course, before we try to encourage others, we should be leading the pursuit to be the kind of members Paul describes here.

Which leads me to the most critical element of a healthy convention – healthy church leaders.

## How are you doing?

How are you doing? I don't mean that in the casual way of "How are you doing? I'm fine, thank you." I mean, are you healthy? Are you still delighting in the Lord as you serve Him in ministry? (Ps 37:5). Does the "peace of Christ rule in your hearts"? (Col 3:15). Are you still rejoicing in Him always? (Phil 4:4). Are you "devoted to prayer, being watchful and thankful"? (Col 4:2). Have you learned "the secret of being content in all circumstances"? (Phil 4:12).

I think that if we were sincere and honest with each other, we would have to admit that we have some days we can say we are well, but in between we have other days when we are disheartened and confused or we are physically drained and spiritually dry or frustrated and angry. When we come together at a meeting like this one or the Ministry Leadership Conference or the Interlaken Summer



IBC President Erik Nielsen

strength and health of our convention depends on the strength and health of our individual churches.

I want to thank Pastor James for his opening message yesterday, and I am thrilled that he is recognized for his passionate prayers for revival. If "revive" means "to return to life, consciousness, vigor, strength, or a flourishing condition" ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)), then I certainly hope that any of our churches who may be lacking in vigor and strength, might, as a result of the encouragement received this week and the prayers of faithful pastors and members, experience a return to health.

## How is your church doing?

Is your church a healthy church? I have to ask myself, "Is my church a healthy church?" It has been eight years since I began serving as its pastor, and praise God, we have seen steady numerical growth, improvement and broadening of ministries, an increase in the number of capable leaders, a growing budget, and a number of babies in our nursery. Each Christmas and Easter we have a choir-led worship service that we advertise and we encour-

Experience, can we agree on something: that we have permission to ask each other and the freedom to tell one another how we are really doing?

Friends, the health of our convention depends on the health of our churches. And the health of our churches depends on the health of its leaders. If you are like me, you don't have a lot of others in your city who are leading an international congregation. You don't have a lot of people with whom you can talk about your spiritual health or to whom you can confess your failures or with whom you can share your burdens. Let's agree that for the sake of the Kingdom of God, we will have healthy churches with healthy leaders because we who are here this week will do what is necessary to ensure we remain healthy.

Last night Pastor James spoke about the need for repentance. One of the definitions of a strong church I recently read, and can only agree with, says: "The marks of a strong church are wet eyes, bent knees and broken hearts."<sup>1</sup> We make the mistake that for us to have healthy churches, we need to be spiritual giants who exercise great faith and win thousands into the Kingdom of God. But "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" (Ps 51:17). Also, "the LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Ps 34:38).

For this is what the high and lofty One says – he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the

lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite (Isa 57:15).

So, maybe an examination of our health should be: How are our eyes? Are they wet? Jesus said "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt 5:4). How are our knees? Are they bent? Jesus said "Blessed are the poor in Spirit" (Matt 5:3). How are our hearts? Are they broken over our own sin and wickedness?

I hope and pray that we will enter an era of our convention in which we can honestly say that it is a healthy convention. That will depend on our churches being healthy, and they depend on us being healthy. So I hope we will listen to all that Pastor James has to say this week and spend a great deal more time on our knees with wet eyes and broken hearts. ■

1 Pentz, Croft M., *The Complete Book of Zingers* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers 1990).

## Body Building Theme for ACM

■ **"Body Building: Growing Healthy Churches"** was the theme for the International Baptist Convention's 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, held 25-28 October at the International Baptist Church, Stuttgart, Germany.

John James, preacher and author from Penarth, Wales, was the keynote speaker. He is the author of *Dry Bones Can Live – How to be Part of a Healthy Church* and served for more than 40 years as a pastor in Wales. James spent four sessions developing this theme and giving those in attendance encouragement and practical applications.

In his first message "It's Time to Get in Shape," James said that each person needs to conduct a spiritual health check, based on Act 2:22-38. Verse 38 in this passage provides four items that each person needs to check to make sure they are spiritually healthy: repentance, baptism, faith/forgiveness, and receipt of the gift of the Holy Spirit. James focused on this last item and reminded those attending that the gift of the Holy Spirit included the person and the power of the Holy Spirit. Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit was three-fold: the incoming of the Spirit (John 14:17), the indwelling of the Spirit (John 14:15), and the infilling of the Spirit (Eph 5:18). Our prayer, James said, should echo Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

"A Healthy Body is a Growing Church"

was the theme of James' second message. One definition of a healthy church, James said, is a learning church, a fellowshiping church, a praying church, a worshipping church, a sharing church, a witnessing church, an exciting church, and a happy church – all at the same time. A healthy church must have a strategy to reach out and reach in at the same time.

Matthew 16:18 gives the promise of a healthy church. The pattern for a healthy church can be found in the entire book of Acts, James said, but especially in Acts 2:42-47. In these verses we can see the pattern for growth: numerically (2:47), in maturity (2:42), in generosity (2:44), and in community (2:47). One of the principles of a healthy church is sharing the Gospel. Throughout the New Testament, James said, we are told to "Go." We are to go to every country (Acts 1:8), to every culture (Matt 28:19), and to every creature (Luke 24:27). Perhaps, James said, God is saying "Go" again to you.

As food is a natural part of every Baptist meeting, there had to be a session on eating. "The Diet for a Healthy Body" was the theme for James' third session (following a wonderful meal of lasagna, salad, bread, and dessert provided by the host church). The diet for a healthy body consists of God's Word and its divine authority, its life-giving vitality, and its miraculous continuity. We need to learn, love, and live the Bible, James said. We need to attend worship services and Bible studies and listen. We need to read the Bible every day, systematically and devotionally. We need



John James

to apply the Word of God to our lives. The Word and the Spirit come together in ordinary people, allowing them to do extraordinary things.

Body building would not be complete without a "Workout for a Healthy Body." Ezekiel 37 provides the perfect workout, James said, as it describes going from a skeleton to a mighty army. There was a desperate situation; the bones were lifeless, useless, and hopeless. The disciples had an obligation to preach with urgency (37:4-7) and pray fervently (37:9). Through a dynamic visitation the Spirit gives life. Verse 10 shows the power to save, the power to stand, and the power to serve. ■

# IBC Welcomes Three New Churches

■ **The International Baptist** Convention voted to accept three new member churches as part of its business sessions at its 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention Meeting, held 25-28 October at the International Baptist Church, Stuttgart, Germany.

Joining the convention were Calvary International Church, São Paulo, Brazil (full member); International Christian Fellowship, Lubbock, Texas, USA (full member); and Koinonia International Christian Fellowship, Aalborg, Denmark (associate member). Like other churches in the convention, ICF-Lubbock is a church reaching internationals associated with the city's university community. The convention also re-affirmed the membership of the International Baptist Church, Antwerp, Belgium.

Messengers to the ACM also approved a 412,863 Euro budget for 2011, representing a 2.89% increase over the 2010 budget. Budget and Finance Ministry Team Coordinator Bob Hnat reported that current projections indicate that while giving to the convention will not meet the bud-

geted amount, the gap will be the least it has been in many years.

During the first business session, Vice President and President-Elect Erik Nielsen was inducted as the new IBC President (see related article on page 4). Nielsen, pastor at First IBC, Copenhagen, Denmark, had been elected during last year's ACM. During the final business session, Sam Owens, pastor of Aviano Baptist Church, Italy, was elected vice president and president-elect. Bob Hnat, pastor of International Bible Church, Hannover, Germany, was elected treasurer. Lorraine Stringer, IBC administrative assistant, was elected clerk. Peter Idris Taylor will serve as Past President.

In other business, convention messengers approved the nominations for the Council of Trustees as well as the ministry teams, agreed to use 20% of the Global Missions Offering to support a critical need at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague (since there were no applicants for the Together We Build Offering), and heard reports from the general secretary, the executive council, and the ministry teams.

George Tone, church planter in Pante-limon, Romania, shared about his work with the Speranta Baptist Church. Speranta means "hope" in Romanian. Tone is one of the church planters supported by the IBC through the European Baptist Federation's Indigenous Missionary Project (see related article on page 7).

John James was the keynote speaker during the ACM (see related article on page 5). James also conducted a forum on "Dealing with Dislocations in the Body." Darryl Evetts, pastor of Frontline Commu-



Erik Nielsen is inducted as IBC President.

nity Church, Ramstein, Germany, led a forum on "Learning to Lead with Cultural Intelligence."

Next year's ACM will be held 24-27 October at Rome Baptist Church, Italy.

The Executive Council of the IBC met on Monday afternoon before the ACM. The Executive Council is composed of the officers, ministry team coordinators, and regional coordinators of the convention. During its meeting, the executive council discussed the convention's current and future partnerships, heard a report about a meeting with the leadership of the Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland, and reviewed the applications for membership from three churches.

The next Executive Council meeting will be held in conjunction with the Ministry Leadership Conference, 25-29 March, in Malaga, Spain. ■

Photos by Judith Lynn Maxwell



IBC General Secretary Jimmy Martin (center) prays for the churches joining the IBC.



Messengers gather in Stuttgart for the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention Meeting.

# Indigenous Church Plants Growing in Romania

■ **George Tone**, church planter through the European Baptist Federation's Indigenous Missionary Project, shared of his work in Pantelimon, Romania, during the IBC's Annual Convention Meeting in Stuttgart. Tone is one of the church planters supported by the IBC.

The church's name is Speranta Baptist Church and that is just what the church offers to the community – hope. Their mission is "With passion for God and compassion for people."

The church started by meeting in a small garage-like building. It was quickly filled with people so they added a second one on to it. With the second building, they could seat 60 people. Soon this building was full as well. They are now building a chapel from wood. The original garages will be used for the children's ministry.

In addition to their Sunday morning service, the church is developing a women's ministry, a church ministry, and a worship team. One of their biggest ministries is a soup ministry to the local children before Sunday School. The church also offers a mandolin orchestra in which many of the young people are interested. The church is also starting to offer Bible studies so that members can grow in spiritual maturity.

The obstacles are great, Tone said. There are not enough Bibles, New Testaments and materials for the children. Fifteen young people are waiting to join the mandolin orchestra because there are not enough instruments. The church is working with the mayor to provide a literacy class for the gypsy community; they need more workers. The church needs additional resources to continue their soup ministry to the children. The church's van is very old and it is not safe to transport the

children from one place to another.

Despite the obstacles, the church remains a beacon of hope to the community. And Tone's work is not finished. Already he has begun to plant another church 18 kilometers away in the town of Popesti-Leo.

Your gift to the IBC's Global Missions Offering will help support Tone and other church planters like him. ■



Photo by Judith Lynn Maxwell

George Tone shares of the hope Speranta Baptist Church brings to Pantelimon. Naty Tully translates.

## IBCM Provides Assistance to IBC Churches

■ **International Baptist Church Ministries (IBCM)** has a single *purpose* – to present the Gospel to all persons with the goal of bringing them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Realizing that local congregations led by called-out pastors are the training base for Christian growth, the IBCM provides financial support to enable churches to help effectively develop mature believers. Readers of *Highlights* can be more informed about IBCM by visiting the website [www.ibcmworld.org](http://www.ibcmworld.org). You can *participate* with others by becoming a member of IBCM. The annual individual dues are only \$25. This is an investment with long-term dividends, like eternal!

Consider joining with like-minded Christians and know that you helped a sister church whose needs you may never know. You can rest in the

knowledge that your annual dues are combined with many others to create a fund for simple immediate needs. Assisting a pastor to travel to a meaningful convention event, providing funds to help cover relocation expenses when a church is facing the end of a lease, or helping a small church with a big vision to add needed office machines to meet communication needs are ways that IBCM members become *partners* with others whose needs are funded through membership dues.

The IBCM website gives all the information needed to submit your dues, become an IBCM member, and begin to experience the joy that comes from caring and sharing. What a great way to spend \$25! ■

Dorothy Hayner

# Global Missions Offering Sunday is 5 December

■ **At its Annual** Convention Meeting in October 2007, the International Baptist Convention voted to establish a once-a-year missions offering. This offering would be known as “Global Missions Offering” and would be collected on the first Sunday in December. This year’s offering will be distributed as :

	EBM	IMP	IBC/CP	IBTS	PARTN	EP	Total %
2010	22.5%	10%	22.5%	20%	20%	5%	100%

The European Baptist Mission is the missionary-sending organization of European Baptists. The IBC is a member union of the EBM and supports its work in Africa, Middle East, and South America.

The money for the Indigenous Missionary Project (IMP) of the European Baptist Federation will go to support the work of indigenous church planters in Moldova and Romania (see related article on page 7).

The IBC is working to plant two new churches within the convention – one in Darmstadt, Germany, and one in Panama City, Panama. Nearly one quarter of the

offering will go to help in this.

There were no applications for the Together We Build portion of the Global Missions Offering. Messengers to the ACM therefore voted that the 20% of the offering normally designated for TWB would go to the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) in Prague. IBTS provides theological training for students mainly from Eastern Europe. They are facing a financial crisis this year. IBTS is associated with the European Baptist Federation of which the IBC is a member. The EBF has asked member unions to provide support for IBTS if possible.

The Partnership Missions portion (formerly May Missions or Home Missions) will go to the Anti-Trafficking Project of the German Baptists. This project exists to assist individuals who have been enslaved in forced labor or sexually exploited for the benefit of those who have enslaved them. Partnership missions projects are selected in countries where the IBC has a church.

Emergency Projects are projects which arise throughout the year such as disaster relief or hunger aid. ■

## In Memorium

■ **Exactly one month** apart, the International Baptist Convention lost two quiet servant leaders. On 17 September, *Ralf Horak* died suddenly at his home outside of Kaiserslautern. On 17 October, *Martin Levey* died quietly at home in Bad Homburg from the effects of a brain hemorrhage suffered six and a half years earlier. Both will be missed.

Ralf served on the Council of Trustees of the convention. He was also the Arrangements Coordinator for the Interlaken Ministry Team and as such he was responsible for making sure the Aula, seminar rooms, children’s rooms, and conference leaders’ hotel rooms were available and ready. He developed a good relationship with the city officials and others in the city of Interlaken. In 2007, the Interlaken Ministry Team decided to offer afternoon bus tours on its own. Ralf quietly accepted this challenge and within a month’s time had an offer from a bus company with the tour packages lined up. He took care of the sign-up and collected the money and even led some of the tours. Ralf told me at the time that being a travel agent/tour director was something that had always interested him.

Ralf also served on the Property Search Committee of the convention from 1998-2002. This committee was tasked with the job of finding new office space for the con-

vention and the result of their work is the office we now own in Frankfurt.

Ralf also faithfully served his home church of Faith Baptist Church, Kaiserslautern, Germany. There he was a Sunday School teacher, deacon, supervisor for the construction of the church’s addition, and much more. Whenever anyone needed help, he was ready and willing to assist.

Ralf was born on 29 March 1942 in Lodz, Poland. He and his family left Poland in 1944 and after a brief stop in Thüringen settled in Freden/Leine in Bayern. He was baptized on Easter Sunday 1962 along with his mother and sister. Near the end of his university time in Reutlingen, during a visit home, he met Gisela and fell in love with her. They were married in August 1967. Initially Ralf worked with his father in the family business, but they soon realized it was not enough to support two families. Ralf and Gisela, along with their two small children, moved to Nettetal where Ralf took a job as a textile engineer and their next child was born.

In 1977, the family moved to Asheville, North Carolina, fulfilling a life-long dream of Ralf’s to live in the U.S. They lived there for eight years and, like other places they had lived, became active in the local church. Ralf served as deacon and Sunday School teacher. They returned to Germany in December 1984 and lived briefly in

Nettetal again. In 1987 the family moved to Kaiserslautern where Ralf accepted a job with the firm Freudenberg. He retired from the firm at the end of 2005.

Ralf is survived by his wife Gisela, sons Steffan and Jan, daughter Sonja, daughter-in-laws Cécile and Virginia, and grandchildren Sara, Mia, Nehemiah, Naomi, Gideon, and Ezra.

Martin was the founding pastor of the International Christian Fellowship, Oberursel, Germany. In 1989, he and his wife Siggie were asked to start an international church in Bad Homburg to reach the international business community of the greater Frankfurt area. Beginning with a small Bible study of four people in January 1990, ICF began to grow, eventually moving to Oberursel. Martin continued to serve as pastor of the church until he suffered the brain hemorrhage in 2004.

During this time Martin also served as President of the then European Baptist Convention. He also served as Interim General Secretary from 2001-2002 during which time Martin helped move the EBC Office from Wiesbaden into the new convention-owned building in Frankfurt.

Martin also had his influence on *Highlights*. It was his vision to have a full-color magazine format. This vision became a reality with the July 2002 edition.

Martin was born on 19 January 1936

# Men's Conference: "Explore The Core"

■ **The annual New Men ministry's** ski retreat and conference will be held 15-18 January at the KUSPO in Lenk, Switzerland. The conference allows men to combine winter outdoor activities with Bible study, worship, learning, and fellowship. The theme for this year's conference is "EXPLORE THE CORE," based on John 8:32.

Speaker for this year will be Neil Anderson, founder and president emeritus of Freedom in Christ Ministries. Anderson is the best-selling author or co-author of more than 50 books including *Bondage Breaker*, *Victory over the Darkness*, and *Discipleship Counseling*. He travels extensively around the world, equipping the church with the message of freedom in Christ. Anderson's most recent book, *The Core of Christianity*, will be available, while supplies last, to those pre-registering for the conference.

Praise and worship will be led by Doug Pierce and Band from First Baptist Church in Orlando, Florida. Pierce has frequently been a part of the retreat in Lenk.

Roger Reber will return for another year as a seminar leader. He, along with Anderson, will teach the study of *Freedom in Christ* during the morning and afternoon seminar session. Other afternoon options are also available.

The cost of conference registration does not include ski rental or ski passes. Meals, beginning with dinner on Friday night, are included in the price, including a packed lunch for those who are skiing if advance notice is given.

Registration is available on-line at [www.abc-churches.org/men](http://www.abc-churches.org/men) or through the men's ministry at your IBC church. ■



Neil Anderson



Ralf Horak (left),  
Martin Levey (right)

in Hailsham, Sussex, England. Martin's father was a cabinet-maker by trade and was chairman of the deacons and a lay-preacher at the Hailsham Baptist Chapel. Martin's mother was church organist and Sunday School teacher. Martin attended church regularly as a child and at the age of 15 became seriously concerned about spiritual issues. A few years later at an Easter Anniversary Service, Martin recognized that God was speaking to him, working on his heart. He was brought to faith in Christ on that occasion and was baptized two months later.

Because of financial reasons, Martin could not enter university right away and instead served an apprenticeship. He was trained in the skills of mechanical engineering and studied in the evenings for his engineering degree. He also took courses in theology at London Bible College. After his apprenticeship, Martin worked for the Atomic Energy Authority in the U.K. as part of a team designing and testing nuclear bombs.

Upon completion of his career training, Martin married and moved to Reading. His first daughter was born there. Martin met a Baptist family who needed help in re-establishing a country church; he agreed to help and soon was teaching an adult Bible class. In 1959, Martin began

traveling to London each Sunday to Westminster Chapel to hear the well-known preacher Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. The impact of Lloyd-Jones' preaching on Martin was enormous; it intensified his desire to serve the Lord by preaching and teaching the Gospel.

Two years later this opportunity came. Martin and his family relocated to Haywards Heath to work, and he was asked to help re-establish another church. In the space of three years the church grew to approximately 200 members – mostly by conversion. Martin taught the 18-30 age group, then was ordained as an elder, and then became the pastoral assistant. It was in Haywards Heath that Martin's second daughter was born.

In 1968, Martin's marriage broke down, and he resigned from all church responsibilities and activities. He left for London totally defeated. For the next five years he rarely attended church. A friend's invitation to attend All Souls Anglican Church was to change Martin's life. A visiting preacher that day spoke from Isaiah 55. The impact of these words were deep and immediate. Martin returned to his hotel room that afternoon and prayed for cleansing and renewal which he found. He began rebuilding his spiritual life. He moved to Blacksburg, Virginia (USA)

where he became involved with the College Baptist Church and where the pastor encouraged Martin to teach again.

Martin returned to Europe in 1975 and began attending Immanuel Baptist Church in Wiesbaden, Germany. Pastor Phil Roberts encouraged Martin to start teaching and preaching again. Martin also became involved with mission work in Romania and Poland. He spent 15 years at Wiesbaden. During this time he also served as interim pastor at the IBC churches at Butzbach and Bad Kreuznach. It was during his years at Wiesbaden that he also met Siggie Arnold. After much prayer and Bible study and with the blessing of the church in Wiesbaden, they were married in December 1986.

The prognosis following Martin's brain hemorrhage was not good. But the Lord had other plans. Martin recovered sufficiently well to enjoy most of the activities that became important in retirement: meaningful friendships, wonderful celebrations, outings, and the ability to reconnect with his church family.

Martin is survived by his wife Siggie and his two daughters Karen and Caroline. ■

Judith Lynn Maxwell

# IBC and Virginia Women Host Moldovan Women's Retreat



Virginia team members deliver food to a needy family.

■ **Virginia Baptists** and the International Baptist Convention, as a joint partnership effort, provided a women's retreat for the Baptist church in Aneeni Noi, Moldova, in early September. Pastor Igor Seremet is one of the church planters supported through the European Baptist Federation's Indigenous Missionary Project.

Pastor Seremet and his wife Marianna prayed for at least 25 women to attend; each day's group numbered 30. Young singles, mothers of young children, grandmothers – all ages – came from several villages in the area. It was the first such women's conference for the church. The group enjoyed seminars, Bible studies, singing, games, and sharing with one another from our different life experiences.

Virginia's team included Lesley Alford, Nancy McDaniel, Sara Small, and Helen Wood, each from a different church in the state. The IBC provided translators: Naty Tully from IBC Bucharest, Romania; Alina Prodan, IBC Bremen, Germany; and Ange-

la Bercaru, a Moldovan university student. The Moldovan women benefited as well from the financial aid the IBC provided, which not only took care of the expenses of the retreat but provided three devotional books in the Romanian language for each participant.

During the week following the retreat, the Virginia team used money donated by their home churches to purchase staple food supplies. Pastor Seremet prepared lists of some of the neediest church families as well as others in the area for whom they have concern. The team divided and, each with a translator, made outreach visits to those homes, delivering the food gifts on behalf of the church.

True partnerships bring blessings to all the partners working together in a project as well as to those who benefit from the effort. Aneeni Noi's women's retreat is an excellent example. ■

*Helen Wood*

## "Invincible Love" Theme for Women's Conference

■ **The IBC Women's Conference** "Invincible Love" will take place 1-3 April at the Sheraton Congress Hotel in Frankfurt, Germany. Eleanor Lewis will be the conference speaker; Miriam Wallace will be the worship leader.

Lewis is an international speaker and Bible teacher. She is currently part of a video teaching series called "The Amazing Collection – The Bible Book by Book." This study is being seen by satellite around the world. As a young woman, Lewis attend-

ed Pennsylvania State University and was a cheerleader for the Pittsburgh Steelers professional American football team. She has also done radio and television commercials and co-hosted a weekly TV talk show in upstate New York.

Wallace was the worship leader for the IBC women's conferences in 2008. She was scheduled to be the worship leader for the 2010 conference but the volcano ash prevented her from getting to Madrid (see September 2010 *Highlights* for the de-

tails). Wallace and her husband Matt run Covered Ministries which can provide not only praise and worship leadership but technical assistance and "go-fers."

Seminars during the conference include "Growing through Transitions," "Women's Health," "Photography in Ministry," and "Actually Hearing God as You Pray His Word."

Registration begins 15 November. For more information and to register, please visit [www.ibc-churches.org/women](http://www.ibc-churches.org/women). ■



Eleanor Lewis



Miriam Wallace

# Jesus, a Passport and Spoken English

By GENE SELANDER, CONVERGE WORLDWIDE

■ From December 4, 2009, to March 4, 2010, I served as the interim pastor for the International Christian Fellowship in Oberursel, Germany. My first Sunday, as I looked out over the audience, I saw every skin color represented – a true rainbow. I couldn't help but think of the chorus we sang as kids: "Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight." For maybe the first time I was experiencing this phenomenal array of people.

My wife joined me to speak to the church's women's group. After Carol delivered her message to approximately 100 women, they split into breakout groups. She joined a group of 11, every woman from a different country.

A great shift has occurred in the world, which has created an opportunity to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A majority of countries now use English as their trade language.

- Foreign universities are graduating students who speak English.
- English is the trade language in professional workplaces globally.
- The number of English-speaking expatriates working abroad is growing.
- America's military footprint has extended into many countries.

Along with this language shift comes another: Internationals from many races are gathering in major world cities to worship together. Basically they have only two things in common: Jesus and English.

## Like Peter and Paul

In Acts 2 we read that the apostles faced a similar situation at the birth of the Church. Jews from many nations had returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. They spoke a common international language, Koine Greek. Beginning with this international gathering, Paul, Peter and other Christian missionaries evangelized the Roman Empire.

Today we use English, not Greek. So in the spirit of Acts 2:5 Converse Church Planting has launched a venture to assist the International Baptist Convention in planting English-speaking international churches in major world cities. These are not Converse Worldwide churches, but they are brothers and sisters who share our foundational beliefs. We consider it a privilege to assist in the expanding Christ's kingdom in partnership with the IBC.

## Connecting in Interlaken

In summer 2008 Jimmy Martin of the International Baptist Convention and Tom Nebel of Converse Worldwide met in Interlaken, Switzerland, to discuss how our organizations could work together in church planting. Upon return, Nebel appointed representatives to visit two potential



church plant cities.

Converse pastors Mike Evans (Faith Community Church, New Richmond, Wisconsin) and Kelly Patchin (New Harbor Community Church, Benicia, California) visited Helsingborg, Sweden, and wrote a detailed assessment of the opportunities they found. I traveled to Panama City, Panama, to appraise opportunities there.

Evans, who took a three-month sabbatical in summer 2008 with his wife and daughter, visited 16-18 IBC churches in eight European countries. He said, "I was not aware of the English-speaking community in the larger international community. I was in churches that had 40 ethnic groups. And I was really struck by the hope national leaders have that English-speaking international church plants can spur their national church groups in church planting."

More meetings of an A2:5 catalyst team, discussion, and prayer led to development of a three-phase system to equip and mobilize IBC and other movements and organizations to plant 100 English-speaking churches in key cities in which:

- Major trade exists and the dominant business language is English.
- There are renowned universities.
- There is an English-speaking military buildup.

The Apostle Paul was a great strategist for spreading the Gospel. He knew that if he could affect the learning centers, business communities, and military complexes of the world, he could reach the nations with the Gospel. A2:5 follows a similar strategy to assist international churches, working in three phases.

## The Three-A system

*Assistance.* First we assist by helping them do the work of recruiting potential church planters, formally assessing these candidates, setting up →

LEAD Teams (groups of church planters who meet together to stay focused on mission), and coaching church planters. In this phase we are primarily doing much of the work, and they are learning our systems and values.

*Assimilation.* At this level the work is more integrated, shared. They take part in recruiting procedures, and not just from our American leaders. They also begin to staff the church planter assessment centers, experiencing hands-on training. They're forming LEAD teams and beginning to coach their people.

### A2:5? WHAT'S THAT?

*Adoption.* At this point they have developed their own toolbox of church planting systems, and we take the role of consultants. They do their own recruiting, conduct their own assessment centers, raise funding, train and support LEAD Teams, and do their own coaching.

### Who's on the team?

Currently, Darryl and Debra Evetts are serving at Frontline Community Church in Ramstein, Germany, and Paul and Dina Dreessen are serving at International Baptist Church in San Jose, Costa Rica. In addition, pastors/spouses Glenn and Sue Hershberger (Real Hope Community Church, Lake Mills, Wisconsin) and Bob and Carol Marsh (Gateway Community Church, Mayville, Wisconsin) were recently appointed to serve in Panama and Germany, respectively.

A team of "catalysts" guide our A2:5 efforts:

- Tom Nebel – Global Church Planting director for Converge Worldwide
- Steve Doggett – Converge International Missions vice president
- Gene Selander – A2:5 International Director
- Bill Ankerberg – pastor and Converge Nordic-Baltic regional director
- Mike Evans – pastor, Faith Community Church, New Richmond, Wisconsin
- Hal Lentz – assistant director of the Nordic-Baltic Regional Partners
- Kelly Patchin – pastor, New Harbor Community Church, Benicia, California
- Steve Treichler – pastor, Hope Community Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Jan Van Oosten – pastor, New Covenant Community Church, Fresno, California

### Your call from God?

At ICF in Oberursel, I was amazed by the unity and acceptance amid all the diversity. My wife and I felt at home in fellowship and found a great degree of commonality with the people. I challenged them to employ the same strategy I use in Denver, where I lead four Bible studies with 80 men in the marketplace. If we can train their medical personnel, people in education or technical fields to do this, then they can reach the young, who aren't buying into church at all. I'm encouraged that a good number of those at ICF view themselves as international ministers paid by a secular organization.

For them, their time in their current post could be short, sometimes two to five years, before they are moved to another international location. So I needed to get them involved quickly. It was a fascinating, exciting experience. I learned much.

If you sense God stirring in your heart to partner with A2:5, learn more at [www.convergewww.org](http://www.convergewww.org). ■

It's shorthand for Acts 2:5: "Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven." A2:5 is a Converge Worldwide venture to assist the International Baptist Convention and other organizations as they plant English-speaking international churches throughout the world. As in Acts 2:5, in major world cities people from many nations have gathered who all speak a common trade language: English. And as in the rest of Acts 2, these people can become the beachhead for reaching the host nation.

## IBC CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2011

JANUARY	
14-17	Men's Conference, Lenk, Switzerland
MARCH	
25-29	Ministry Leadership Conference for pastors/ church staff, lay leaders & their spouses, Malaga, Spain
26	Executive Council, Malaga, Spain
APRIL	
1-3	Women's Conference, Frankfurt, Germany

JULY	
9-14	IBC SUMMER ASSEMBLY, INTERLAKEN, SWITZERLAND
9-14	EUROVENTURE, GRINDELWALD, SWITZERLAND
OCTOBER	
9	IBC DAY
24	New Pastor & Wife Orientation*
24	Executive Council*
24-27	Annual Convention Meeting*
DECEMBER	
4	GLOBAL MISSIONS OFFERING

\*all held at Rome Baptist Church, Italy



Awana help meet a need in the international community in Buenos Aires.

## Buenos Aires, Argentina

■ **One of the ministry highlights** of the International Bible Church, Buenos Aires, Argentina, is our Awana program which we began almost a year ago. Weekly we've had up to 30 kids from the international community attend on Tuesdays. This has met an unmet need in the community and also enabled us to make many contacts. ■

*Bryon Butler*

## Kaiserslautern, Germany

■ **Here at Faith Baptist Church**, Kaiserslautern, Germany, in missions, we've started working with two German-language church plants in the contiguous area – in Neustadt and Landau on the Weinstrasse. In one we're cooperating with the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention. In the other, the congregation is composed largely of former Russian Baptists who've immigrated to the Rheinland. On 6 November, a team of our men assisted the latter church in completing interior work for the building they're using. Both are exciting, evangelistic fellowships.

A related new project is with a group called "Skybridge" who is associated with the IMB. They utilize Christian "tent-makers" working in Germany to team up to plan new churches. Right now the facilitating group works out of Black Forest Academy near Basel. They've asked us to partner in their church planting in Germany.

We're also continuing our support of church plants through the European Baptist Federation's Indigenous Missionary Project. This year, we complete five years' sponsorship of church plants in Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Romania (2). We're also assisting one of the pastors, Jakab Sallai in Romania, with his doctoral studies in theology. We plan to continue

sponsoring three of those churches and to devote more of our attention to some missions support projects in Nigeria and Nicaragua. This year we completed three years of assisting our sister IBC church in the Azores in building their new Children's Camp. Faith also sent more than \$11,000 to the IMB Disaster Relief Fund designated for projects in Haiti and other disaster sites.

We just had a group of our men return from their annual men's "work" trip to Elim Christian Center in Poland. Among other things they moved 8,000 pounds of potatoes by hand which we're told will last Elim all winter. Our women's mission group will go there in May for the eighth year. One feature of their trip is a medical missions team that ministers to several hundred people each trip.

Each year for the last five years, a team of our women have also gone to Hyderabad, India, to co-lead a week-long Christian women's conference in which approximately 600 women participate annually. This year, our Indian Christian friends have asked Faith to sponsor and lead a first-time women's conference in the area of New Delhi in northern India. We ask the IBC's prayer for that conference and for the team of women going; preparation has already begun.

For our Thanksgiving Retreat this year,

the speakers will be John and Sarah Perkins, long-time IMB missionaries to France. They will ask our church to assist them by sending a youth and adult missions team to do "street evangelism" and Bible clubs in the central mountain region of France.

Here closer to home in our "Jerusalem," the church is involved in assisting some of our widows and deployed families with projects related to their homes. We support the Crisis Pregnancy Center of Kaiserslautern through volunteers and operating funds, as well as the local Women and Children's Abuse Shelter.

Faith again will dedicate its Christmas International Missions offering to the IMB Lottie Moon offering. Faith has been the recipient of generous Lottie Moon investment through the years including, early in our history, the purchase of the land where the church facilities stand. Our Lottie Moon offering last year totaled more than \$30,000 with an additional \$5,000 added from the church's overage in giving at the end of the year. We thank God for the opportunity to enter into the ministry of more than 5,500 IMB missionaries.

We thank the Lord also for the opportunity to be associated with evangelistic missions through the IBC. ■

*Altus Newell*

## Portimão, Portugal

■ **This summer** has seen the beginning of two important ministries at the International Christian Fellowship Baptist Church, Portimão, Portugal. The first is a soup kitchen which operates every Monday. Approximately 15-20 people come each week – some homeless, some com-



(Top) Church members gather in front of their “new” building. (Bottom) Soup kitchen ministers to Portimao community.

ing off (or still on) drugs and alcohol. We provide a simple lunch of soup, rolls, cake, and fruit; offer our friendship and a time to talk; and get to know them. We have Bibles and Christian literature available for those who would like to know more. Sometimes we have a brief devotional at the end for those who would like to stay. Since May we have seen those who come develop friendships with each other and start to open up and talk more. Two (Marcio and Monica) have prayed to receive Christ. The Lord has really blessed this ministry. It began as a practical application of a Bible study about loving others without showing partiality and it has blossomed into a very fruitful ministry. Every week we see new faces and are so glad to welcome them in. Please pray that these people will find hope and purpose for their lives in the Lord. Pray for Orlanda, Deolinda, Vitor, Fernando, Monica, Vera, Marcio, and Etol.

Another new venture has been the start of an outreach service at a hotel in Alvor, a nearby town that has no English-language church. We have had as many as 50 and as few as six. Please pray that the Lord would bring more people and provide the fund-

ing needed for this ministry to continue.

You may remember that our congregation had to move out of the premises we had used for 18 years. After much prayer and investigation into possible venues (which all proved to be far more than we could afford), we decided to convert the multi-purpose room which our church actually owns (thanks to a generous grant years ago from the International Baptist Convention). Church members donned work clothes, removed old cabinets and kitchen sink, pulled up old flooring, painted, decorated, sewed curtains, built a podium and a cross, put down a new cork floor and together have made a lovely new place of worship. We are grateful to the Lord for His provision and for those who worked hard to make it all possible. It was a bit like Nehemiah and all the people rebuilding the wall. On 6 June we had our opening service in the new building. The weekend before, we celebrated by having a fellowship lunch together at the local park. God has been good to us and has used this time of working together to help bond our church family together. ■

*Joy Borgan*

## Brasilia, Brazil

■ **God has been faithful** in strengthening the church family at the International Baptist Church, Brasilia, Brazil. September was a particularly fruitful month with our sports clinic, women’s brunch, and men’s breakfast.

In partnership with a local Portuguese-language church, we held our first sports clinic. This event was the first step in our two-year outreach strategy using sports to 1) reach youth and their families in economically challenged communities surrounding Brasilia, 2) strengthen local churches, and 3) mobilize the IBC congregation to serve on mission. Our partnership with local churches is crucial for structuring sports clinics that are culturally sensitive. David Leister worked tirelessly in coordinating the many unexpected details that arise when an international church teams with a local church. The IBC team represented seven nations (Kenya, Burkina Faso, Brazil, U.S., Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Burundi). Forty-eight local youth attended the clinic and strong relationships were formed as they learned biblical life principles, recited Scripture, and heard the Gospel. The local church conducted follow-up through home visitation the week following the event. We were very pleased with this clinic as it will serve as a

strong platform on which we can build future sports clinics.

The IBC women’s brunch was an enjoyable time of fellowship and mutual encouragement. Xiao Wei just recently received Christ, and she gave an inspiring testimony. She shared how she is growing spiritually and how she loves her new spiritual family at IBC. IBC member Maeli Andrade gave a testimony about her mission team experience in South Africa and how she saw God moving at the World Cup. The brunch concluded with Phyllis Alanis providing a fantastic moment of special music singing *Because of Who You Are* – acappella. This was a wonderful time of refreshment, laughter, and food. We are excited to see how God uses this event as a bridge to the IBC women’s conference in March.

The IBC men’s breakfast opened with a tasty selection of various foods prepared by Don Hubble and Mark Thompson. The teaching was provided through John Piper’s “Don’t Waste Your Life” DVD message. This wonderfully challenging teaching sparked a lively conversation afterward with fruitful individual soul-searching. One man from Botswana noted that even though the DVD message was originally given to a group of Americans (Campus

Crusade for Christ) it was applicable to people from any culture. In the reflection time afterwards some men commented about their discomfort with such a “confrontational” message. It was encouraging to see mutual ministry take place as men exhorted one another to receive such teaching with a willingness to change and mature spiritually for the glory of Christ. ■

*Marc Day*



A sports clinic reaches youth in Brasilia.

## Oberursel, Germany

■ **This has been** a very exciting time for our community here at International Christian Fellowship, Oberursel, Germany. For the entire month of October we celebrated



our unity while highlighting our diversity during our first "International Month." Each Sunday we focused on a different continent through our worship in music, Scripture readings, and a special interview segment called "Windows on the World." It was truly a sweet time of fellowship emphasizing our core values of "unity and acceptance."

On 17 October, the IBC and ICF lost one of those great "oaks of righteousness" in the passing of Martin Paul Levey. Like any good family, the ICF community gathered in support of his widow Siggie Levey and his two daughters Karen and Caroline. We had a wonderful time of fellowship as we honored the life and legacy of a great man

of God. Martin Levey and his wife planted the International Christian Fellowship with four individuals in 1990; 20 years later we average more than 200 on Sunday mornings and a countless number of lives have been changed for Christ! We laughed, we cried, and we thanked God for Martin Levey, whose visionary leadership contributed to the success of the ICF church plant. Martin's life and legacy reminds each of us just exactly what God can do with a man or woman, who doesn't hold anything back from the Lord, committing himself fully to the work of the Lord! ■

*Carsten Lotz*

## Calahonda, Spain

■ **Since the doors** of the Calahonda Baptist Church (CBC) opened on the 18 April, with the first service being led by the new Interim Pastor Jim McVicar, there has been an increasing expectancy of what God is about to do at CBC.

Moving forward in faith and living in harmony, we are focusing on a bright and promising future. Weekly meetings at the church are well attended, and CBC has a reputation for being a friendly, prayerful place with outstretched arms giving a warm welcome to all.

The monthly men's breakfast has been a good time for men to come together to enjoy a good meal and some quality time sharing. Equally, the women's Bible study remained focused throughout the summer as Anne McVicar led the women through the book of Psalms.

We are blessed to have gifted missionary families who, as well as ministering in other areas, assist in the praise and worship team, blessing us with such musical diversity. By tapping into this resource the church held an outstanding Open House at the end of July. The church hosted a very

low-key event that included some contemporary songs, stories from an amazing storyteller from Canada, and delightful poems that were specially penned by Debbie Rail. The choir excelled under the direction of Yazz by singing a number from Bob Marley's songbook. The evening wrapped up with an array of tempting desserts that had been prepared by the women of the church. The church was packed, and many non-Christians attended.

The big event of the past six months was the Dedication Service that was held on 18 September, marked by an exceptional service that was attended by leading rep-



resentatives from the International Baptist Convention and Spanish Baptist Conference, traveling from Germany and Madrid. Pastors and friends also traveled from different parts of the UK, Spain, and Gibraltar to be present. Acknowledging the cultural representation in the church was, in itself, inspiring as there are more than 20 different nationalities worshipping at CBC.

We are always delighted to report on what Yazz and her special ministry team have been doing. Yazz is well known on the coast for her radio interviews and singing. She continues to travel in the UK and Europe, recently returning from a two-week concert tour of the UK where she presented her 'Fame 2 Freedom' evening in three different cities. Many people responded to the challenge to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Praise God! ■

*Jim McVicar*

**Pastor Jose Carmet, Malaga Baptist Church; IBC General Secretary Jimmy Martin; and Senor Manuel Sarrias, General Secretary, Spanish Baptist Union.**

## San José, Costa Rica

■ **At the International** Baptist Church, San José, Costa Rica, we have made another big change. We adjusted our Sunday morning schedule by offering Sunday School at the same time as our services. Our new schedule looks like this:

9:00-10:15: 1<sup>st</sup> Service and Sunday School  
10:15-10:30: Transition and Fellowship  
10:30-11:45: 2<sup>nd</sup> Service and Sunday School

The reason for this change was because we simply did not have enough educa-

tion space for the growth we have experienced in our Sunday School. We averaged more than 200 in September and didn't have enough space. Six years ago we averaged 85 in Sunday School. By offering two Sunday School times we have essentially doubled our space. We started this new schedule on 3 October. Thanks to a great deal of hard work it has been a big success. We have an awesome Sunday school director who has done a bang-up job of coordinating all of this; so all things

considered, it has gone pretty smoothly. One benefit that is happening is that it is making our two services a little more even. In our previous format we would have our first service half full and our second service packed. Now, both services should have plenty of room to grow. Continue to pray for us as we navigate through these changes and continue to try and reach and disciple more people. ■

*Paul Dreessen*

## Aviano, Italy

■ **Aviano Baptist Church's** Women's Ministry had the incredible pleasure of putting together and attending a retreat during the first weekend of October. It was a weekend full of beauty and blessings. The retreat was held at the Fortuna Island Hotel in Proec, Croatia. The hotel is located on its own little island right off the mainland. The view from any of the rooms was breath taking.

The weekend was about "Finding Joy and Peace in the Amazing Race." We learned that joy and peace are not born from happy or easy times in our lives, rather developed from life's difficulties and tragedies. Our speaker Dana Sassman delivered several excellent messages on this theme. She gave us Scripture and shared with us some important truths that, if applied to our lives, would help us discover the joy and peace we long for.

While this was Dana's first experience at leading such an event, she proved that she is a capable and dynamic retreat speaker. She was thoroughly prepared and highly professional in her presentations to the women. All of the women were so blessed by her, and they were very generous in their compliments as to the great job that Dana did.

Dana was gentle, kind, honest, and vulnerable in the ways she shared with the women. We had an extraordinary music team led by Kristen Holliday who led us in some familiar praise songs to God and taught some new and wonderful songs of worship. God's presence was overwhelming and humbling. There were three women who gave their lives over to Christ! And, there were several women, three that we are aware of, who rededicated their lives to the Lord. Several others were moved to tears and prayer as they sought the fullness of joy that the Lord wants for them.

The whole weekend was a wonderful opportunity to grow closer to the Lord, where ever the women were on their walk with God, and it was an extraordinary blessing to become bonded as sisters in Christ. We are so thankful for this trip that fanned the flames of our hearts for Jesus. We thank our church for their support and prayers in this adventure. There were 32 women who attended. and 32 women who were changed!

After the retreat, Dana described her own retreat experience: "When I started preparing to speak at the women's retreat for Aviano Baptist I was completely overwhelmed. The theme was 'Finding Joy and Peace in the Amazing Race.' The Bible has so much to say about all three subjects of joy, peace, and the race in which we all run that I was very uncertain how I was going to accomplish this great task. I was completely and utterly blessed by the Lord, and He gave me the words to say. I have to say the biggest blessing of being the teacher was learning what I was in desperate need of in my own life. I truly was able to understand joy and peace in a Godly way. We learned that we can only have joy through trials and tribulations. We are told to be at peace with others and that the peace of God is given to all believers."

Dana continued, "We also took a look at our own lives to see if we are using our spiritual gifts for the Lord. God taught me many things as I prepared the lessons. I hope I can continue to remember those lessons on a daily basis. We serve an amazing God, and He is able to do what we see as impossible."

Laura Broome was among the women who were so deeply impacted by the retreat. This is her testimony as to what God did in her life through this experience: "One of my long-standing prayers is to always walk the path that



Small group sharing is an important part of retreats.

God intended for me. It's especially difficult because I never seem to have a CLEAR sense of what, exactly, that is. It seems that, at times, I get so excited about carrying God's torch, that in my excitement, I rush ahead, (walking my own path instead of the Lord's), only to find myself in the dark, lost again, and searching for the path. And once again I find myself, all enthusiasm and good intentions, with no clear sense of direction or purpose."

Laura continued, "The first morning of the women's retreat, I prayed for guidance during a morning prayer walk. Later the same day, as part of our discussion, the conference leader was discussing the importance of each of us utilizing our 'spiritual gift' – a term I'd never heard. Without realizing it, I jumped ahead, once again, and began filling out the blank space in my pamphlet that asked what I believed my spiritual gift was. After contemplating the question, I wrote that my spiritual gift was communication; I'm articulate and prone to using simple, yet graphic analogies to illustrate a point or a particular message – even my pastor once compared me to Dickens. Only after receiving the hand-out, did I realize there was already a list of defined spiritual gifts; my answer most closely matched the gift of 'knowledge,' which was defined as 'the God-given ability to learn, to know, and to communicate.'"

Laura explained further, "Seeing my answer of 'communication' defined as the gift of 'knowledge,' really opened my eyes to the truth – the gift of communication, MY gift, is useless and ineffective without first LEARNING and KNOWING. It really put things in perspective for me – my talent for communication shown in stark relief to my lack of actual knowledge. I felt ashamed for assuming a talent for communication without yet thoroughly learning and knowing the message to be communicated. It was a not-so-subtle reminder of the importance of seeking to understand before seeking to be understood. It was then that I knew I received the guidance I'd so recently prayed for. I needed to read my Bible - not just READ, but LEARN, and KNOW the Scriptures. Only through knowledge can I make a worthy and valuable contribution utilizing my God-given 'spiritual gift.'"

In the future Aviano Baptist intends to try to work with other churches in the southern part of the International Baptist Convention in the hope of multiplying the benefits of retreats such as this. ■

Tina Donmoyer