

HIGHLIGHTS

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Jimmy Martin

**Opportunities and
Obstacles for God's
Global People**

Alistair Brown

**Effective Ministry
in a Tough World**

Sam Owens

**Prayer Therapy for
Healthy Churches**

Opportunities and Obstacles

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After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you – for I will be going through Macedonia. Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me. If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. No one, then, should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers. Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity. Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.
(1 Corinthians 16:5-13, emphasis added)

■ **At our Annual Convention** Meeting, hosted by Rome Baptist Church in Rome, Italy, we were reminded again that the global potential for English-language international churches is astounding. Visit English-language churches around the world, and you will find Gospel light in dark places – light that gives hope and help to many kinds of people:

- International students – some from places where the Gospel is not heard and Christian faith is largely unknown;
- Refugees in desperate need of Christian love – often abused by the governments and employers where they live and unwelcomed by their native countries;
- Business men and women open to Christian ministry and a Gospel witness as they struggle with the stresses of long working hours, family separation, and the challenges of international living;
- Military members and their families frequently separated, removed from all that is familiar and in need of genuine personal and family support;
- Members of a diplomatic corps or other governmental workers, leading incredibly busy lives but in need of stability and strength for living;
- Nationals who may know little of Christian faith but are interested to learn more, or national believers who wish to live and grow in an international English-speaking church.

Yet, IBC and other international congregations can develop problems that confound and contradict the Gospel they proclaim. Problems can become so severe, so debilitating, that what should be the greatest asset of a church – the influence of its members – becomes the greatest liability to the Lord's work. Even in the best of churches, it is a challenge to manage conflict, differing opinions, misunderstandings, and other challenges of multicultural, multiracial, multilingual, multidominational, and extremely mobile congregations.

Life and ministry present us with both opportunities and obstacles that we should not over- or under-estimate. Otherwise, a leader might despair under the weight of challenges, set himself or herself up for future disappointment, or succeed at “lesser things” or “lesser ways” that are not worthy of the Gospel of Christ. We all face challenges to which we must respond. The way we respond to our challenges tells us a great deal about ourselves and our belief in the God we serve. Do we see Him as having a preference for one culture or race or style of worship (usually ours) or another? Do we believe that Christ's death on the cross really removed national and cultural and racial barriers that divide us so that believers can see one another as brothers and sisters? Can God use us as reconcilers to bring people together whom culture says should remain apart and at war? Is it worth our efforts? Do buildings and budgets and baptisms tell the whole story of what it means to be a Christ-honoring church family?

Our response also affects the health and growth of Christ's church. We need to be careful “how we build,” to use Paul's analogy of gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw. We need to be careful how we serve and how we respond to our opportunities and obstacles. Our vision for the future must embrace both if it is to be realistic, transformational, and honoring to God. Paul's words, quoted above, are honest and clear expressions of his hopes and fears in life and ministry.

Tentative Travel Plans (verses 5-7, 10-12)

How many of us – five or 10 or 20 years ago – would have predicted that we would be doing what we are doing where we are doing it today? Just as Paul made his tentative travel plans, so should we. Scripture warns us of holding too tightly to our plans. The Christian life is called the Way, a journey, a road, a walk, and a race in the Bible. Jesus' call to his disciples was and is, “Fol-

for God's Global People

low me." We cannot follow Him and stay where we are. Sometimes that means physically moving; it always means, "leaving all to follow Him."

I love my GPS. It has saved me countless hours of travel and numerous frustrations. Laurie and I are happier travelers when the cheerful British voice is leading us in travel. When "Gretchen" says, "Reconfiguring" or "Redirecting" route, we trust that she knows the way better than we do. We also recognize that we can make wrong turns or take wrong roads but that most mistakes can be corrected with right instruction and a willingness to change.

Ministry involves the tensions of time, circumstances, and people. Paul shares his travel plans. Writing from Ephesus, he plans to go to Corinth through Macedonia (the land route) and then on to Jerusalem. Meanwhile, he plans to send Timothy to Corinth to prepare for his coming. Apollos considered coming to Corinth, with Paul's full blessing, but decided against it for the near future. Read Acts 20:1-3 and 2 Corinthians 1:15-2:4, and you find that Paul seems to have done the opposite of what he planned to do. He made a quick visit to Corinth by sea. A crisis with the church took place, which seems to have taken two letters and two visits to correct.

We are wise to plan but foolish to tattoo our plans to God's will for us. Note the hopeful uncertainty of Paul. In verse 6, he uses tentative words like "perhaps" and phrases like "if the Lord permits." Ministry can be both wonderful and frustrating. Often we have little control over what happens around us. Sometimes the people God brings into our lives make it both wonderful and challenging.

Timothy and Apollos (verses 10-12) were part of Paul's tentative plans. Paul seemed concerned that the church treat Timothy in a kind way. Paul was sending him as his representative. Timothy's timid nature could make this fellow church-planter a convenient target of the Corinthians' attacks on Paul. In Apollos' case, it seems the Corinthians had requested that he come. Paul's willingness for him to go, and Apollos' refusal to go at that time tell us a lot about these two men of God, especially when you consider that the Corinthian church was divided and was claiming Paul and Apollos as the champions of their division (see 1 Corinthians 3). Paul considered Apollos as his partner in ministry, a co-laborer. The depth of our grace and humility and trust will be shown in our responses to the most challenging situations in life and ministry. Paul shows us a proper, crucial view of our common work – we are family; we are a fellowship; we are in partnership. That is easy to forget in times of trouble, especially conflict. But it is important to remember that Christian leaders are not in competition with each other but are servants in partnership. I am not your enemy; you are not mine. Traveling the road together honors God and helps us to get where He wants us to go.

Opportunities for Gospel Advance (verses 8-9)

In verse 9, Paul gives an excellent summary of his lifelong experience as a minister and missionary. It

was certainly his experience in Ephesus (read the story in Acts 19 and 20). Perhaps it is also our experience – "a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me." I want to suggest from the account in Acts, that IBC churches share a lot of the opportunities for Gospel advance that Paul had.



Global Outreach at Our Doorstep. During Paul's ministry in Ephesus, "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." Ephesus was a gateway city, and Paul took the opportunities to reach the world as it passed through that city. Fundamental to our church-planting efforts, and indeed our vision of reaching the nations, is taking advantage of the people from around the world who come into our communities. International churches and military churches alike have a unique opportunity to share with people who are coming from the ends of the earth and going to the ends of the earth. Some will come and hear if we will go and tell. What are we doing to share with those around us who need to hear?

International Discipleship on the Run. Paul spent about three years in Ephesus. In the end, he would tell the Ephesian elders, "you will never see me again." Paul committed these faithful men, who had been disciplined by him, to the Lord to carry on the work of the church. Jesus also had approximately three years with His disciples, then commissioned them to carry on His work. Although it varies somewhat, most IBC churches have approximately two to three years to disciple members before they move on to other locations. Each IBC church should ask, "What can we do to 'make disciples' of the people God brings to us so that when they leave, they not only know how to feed themselves and grow and minister to others, but they also know how to disciple others?" A good indicator of the effectiveness of a church may be, not how many are attending on a Sunday, but how many are growing and ministering, and helping others to grow.

Incarnational Ministry that Transforms. Paul's legacy to the Ephesians was that he finished the race and completed the task the Lord Jesus had given to →

English-language churches around the world provide a Gospel light in dark places – light that gives hope and help to many kinds of people.

him. Paul did it by his life, as well as his words. He was a faithful servant. He could say, "Follow me as I follow Christ." When Paul left, the Ephesian church had a good example of what it means to follow Christ in a pagan society. We, too, have that opportunity to demonstrate to a lost world a better way, the best way, God's way. What kind of Christ are we as churches presenting to our communities? Is the warmth on the inside warmer than the cold on the outside?

Genuine Fellowship Restored. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians (2:14-16), he speaks of Christ as the barrier breaker between Jews and Greeks. God's purpose, Paul says, was to create "one new man out of the two." I was in Nazareth recently for the annual meeting of the European Baptist Federation and to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Baptist work in Israel. It was interesting to see how Arab evangelical Christians, a minority within a minority within a minority, are seeking to be salt and light in their country. At the meeting, we heard two speakers, one a messianic Israeli and another a Palestinian Arab, who work with a group called Musalaha.



We face obstacles if we are making a difference in our communities.

Musalaha seeks to promote reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians as demonstrated in the life and teaching of Jesus. They seek to be an encouragement and facilitator of reconciliation, first among Palestinian Christians and Messianic Israelis, and then beyond to their respective communities (see their website at www.musalaha.org). IBC churches also have an opportunity to build bridges of friendship with others that lead people to find the Friend who died to break down barriers of hostility and prejudice. Ours is a Gospel of reconciliation. If we have been reconciled to God, we are called to be ambassadors of reconciliation.

Heavenly Worship Previewed on Earth. God's purpose in breaking down walls of hostility was to build a holy temple. God's people are "being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his

Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). We (God's people together) are the temple of the Holy Spirit. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 3:16-17, and asked "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" he was speaking not of the bodies of individual Christians but of the collective Body of Christ, the church. IBC churches have a unique opportunity to express global worship as people from around the world – "red and yellow, black and white" – gather as one body to worship the Lord together. It is a preview of the day when people from every tribe and language and people and nation will gather to declare, "Worthy is the Lamb" (Rev. 5:9ff). IBC churches should ask themselves, "Does our worship reflect the diversity of culture, race, and language that make up our congregation?" If not, perhaps it is time to change, to put new wine into new wineskins. Do you celebrate your diversity or just tolerate it?

Obstacles that Threaten (verses 8-9)

Paul had earlier told the Corinthians, "I fought with wild beasts in Ephesus" (1 Cor. 15:32). Paul faced obstacles and opposition of various kinds. So do we, if we are making a difference in our communities.

Demonic. Acts 19 tells about the "seven sons of Sceva" who tried to mimic Paul's ministry but were overpowered by a man who had an evil spirit. The evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Paul knew about evil spirits, and they knew about him. He recognized the enemy of the

Gospel. He would tell the Ephesians that our battle is not against flesh and blood and that our enemy seeks to devour, deceive and destroy us. We are in a battle (Eph. 6:10-20). The battle is fought first in prayer. As John Piper says, "Prayer is a wartime activity. ... God has given us prayer because Jesus has given us a ministry." Satan attacks God's church from the outside and the inside.

Economic. Acts 19 tells about Demetrius the silversmith who saw that the Gospel was bad for his business of making idols used in the worship of the patron goddess of Ephesus, Artemis (Diana). Eventually, a mob ensued in the city theater. Following Christ can be bad for business. In times of economic distress such as we are living in, people indicate by the way they spend their income what is most important. We worship what is most important to us. Fol-

lowing Christ always costs us, sometimes economically.

Religious. Acts 20:18-19 tells us that it was religious people who sought to destroy God's work. They resisted change. They clung to traditions over against God's Word and ways. The "wolves" that Paul warned the Ephesian elders about were false teachers who would try to destroy what God had built. IBC churches regularly face the opposition from well-meaning people who refuse to consider anything different than from what they have experienced or anything that brings change. Religion without relationship is deadly and leads to spiritual pride or hopelessness.

Seizing Our Opportunities and Overcoming Our Obstacles (verse 13)

We want to make a difference. How?

1. *Stay Alert.* "Be on your guard." Some things are obvious and others are not. If we are not alert, we may mistake the good for the best. We may have misplaced priorities that go unnoticed, yet cripple us. We may find ourselves fighting ourselves rather than the real enemy. We may also miss our opportunities for evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and worship unless we keep our eyes open.

2. *Serve Faithfully.* There are times we all want to quit, leave the field of battle, quit the fight of faith. God has given us His promises, His Word, His Holy Spirit, and one another. We need the encouragement to "keep on keeping on."

3. *Show Courage.* Stand up for God's Word and God's way and God's work, especially in the face of adversity. Sometimes we need to risk for the Kingdom's sake.

4. *Be strong.* Go to the One who is your strength. He will help you stand.

5. *Love fully.* Here is crux of our relationships with one another. "Do everything in love" reminds us that it is NEVER right to be unloving. Think of the many problems in the Corinthian church – quarrels, abuse of members, hostility toward Paul, marriage challenges, abuse of spiritual gifts, abuse of worship, and others. Yet he says, "do everything in love." Genuine love, given to us and expected from us, is the key to correcting problems and also preventing them.

We have open doors that we should walk through. By God's grace and with His strength and guidance, we can do what He calls us to do and be what He calls us to be. He is worth our very best.

Serving with you, ■

Jimmy Martin

Brown Offers Encouragement for Doing Ministry in a Tough World



Alistair Brown

■ **“True Grit – Effective Ministry in a Tough World”** was the theme for the International Baptist Convention’s 48th Annual Meeting, held 24-27 October at the Rome Baptist Church, Italy.

Alistair Brown, president of Northern Seminary, Lombard, Illinois (USA), provided encouragement to pastors and leaders during his four messages during the week.

In his message on Monday night, “Under Great Pressure,” Brown listed 12 reasons why leaders are under pressure: persecution, illness, tiredness, criticism, letting people down, ministry is not what we thought it would be, ministry is not working like you expected, ministry is working and you feel you have to hold it all together, not being able to cope, feeling of not knowing what to do, feeling of being alone, and we have no idea what we do.

Paul, too, faced pressures. In 2 Corinthians 1:1-11, Brown said, we find Paul’s response to the pressures he faced. We are not immune to hardships. All Christians will face hardship at some point. Struggles can go very deep. Effectiveness in ministry is not how we feel. Ministry is not a game we play, Brown said, but spiritual warfare. Christian leaders do not need for the pressures and the struggles they face to be secret. Times of struggling are not times of failure.

In verse nine, though, Paul reminds us that there is more, Brown said. There is a God who is well able to deliver us. The prayers of others really matter. What we go through will help others. There is a day that it will be over, Brown reminded those attending. In God’s great providence, He allows us to struggle, but nothing is wasted. Through the struggles we can grow and soar.

In his message on Tuesday night, “Who am I that I Should Go?,” based on Exodus 3:1-11, Brown addressed some of the issues inside of Moses related to his call.

Moses really struggled with God. Brown asked, “Are you willing to do the will of God even when it differs from your will?” The reasons we struggle is because our lives are not always as given to God as we say or think they are, Brown said. God also sends us into hard and difficult places. He sends His people where there is a need for light and people need to be rescued.

Moses was reluctant to believe he was the right man. He had a deep sense of personal inadequacy, Brown said, and a fear of failure. Moses also found that ultimately there was no way out of God’s will. God reached a point, Brown said, where He was no longer tolerant of Moses’ excuses. There reaches a point, Brown said, where it is the end of discussion – you must go and do.

In the end, Moses saw success – God used him. The Father has called you, Brown said, and what comes of it all is His business. If God did the mighty things through reluctant men like Moses, Jonah, and Gideon, Brown said, then you can know that God, through you, is doing great things.

Brown’s Wednesday night message, “Now You will See what I will Do,” based on Exodus 5:15-6:12, continued to look at the life of Moses. Moses faced opposition and so will leaders of today. In Pharaoh, Moses encountered an immovable opposition. Pharaoh did not recognize the authority of God. There will be people in churches today, Brown said, who cannot believe that God’s will could be different than their own. As a leader, do not work out a big plan by yourself and expect people to accept it. People want to be consulted. People oppose change when it goes against them. God used Pharaoh’s opposition to His glory. There is a mystery to God’s action, Brown said, that is often hard to understand. We are not as wise as God is. God will always be true to His nature.

Discouraging people can turn God’s people away. When change involves suffering, the enthusiasm goes away. Sacrifice is part of the journey of faith. As leaders, Brown said, we need to prepare people for what sacrifice really means. Leaders need to learn to survive criticism. The church is God’s responsibility and He can deal with the issues. God gives us reassurances and promises. When Moses was at his lowest point, God said “Now you will see what I will do.”

Leaders need to remember God’s nature. These verses remind them of His nature: faithful – “I will do”; mighty – “I will bring you out”; and loving – “I will be your God.” It is a tough world – full of opposition and criticism, Brown said, but it is also God’s world – there is victory and reward.

In his final message on Thursday morning, “Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus,” based on Hebrews 12:1-3, Brown offered six final points of encouragement to leaders. We need to run the race, Brown said. Running a race is a good metaphor for the Christian life. Running is hard; goals are not achieved if you stay in the same place; and there is pain and exhaustion. While the race is still going, Brown said, it hurts, but it is worth it in the end.

We need to persevere. In today’s world, Brown said, we are used to instant results and quick fixes. The Christian life requires patience and perseverance – until the race is over.

We need to stay on the path – on the race marked for us. There is a path, Brown said, there is a call that is uniquely yours. Never surrender your call for anything out of your call. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus. The call comes from Him, and His power equips us. His reward is all we need and to Him alone will we give an account. We need to see that Jesus really goes before us. He is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Jesus has already walked the path that we will walk.

Finally, Brown said, we need to never lose heart. We can so easily give up. But, Brown said, God is at work. God is there – never lose heart. God has poured His power on us. His Spirit is upon us and within us. He will never abandon you. He is doing something – something that matters for eternity. You can step out in faith and depend on Him. ■

Prayer Therapy For Healthy Churches

BY SAM OWENS, IBC PRESIDENT AND PASTOR, AVIANO BAPTIST CHURCH, AVIANO, ITALY

NOTE: This is a reconstruction of the sermon preached on Tuesday during the Annual Convention Meeting of the International Baptist Convention, Rome, Italy. It is not a precise word-for-word manuscript of the sermon as it was preached, but it captures the full intent and most of the content of that sermon.

■ **Last year** we in the International Baptist Convention began a theme of growing healthy churches. That is a very appropriate theme, and we continue along that line this year. In the short time I have this morning I want to talk a little bit about one sure way to ensure that we grow healthy churches. That is through what I call "Prayer Therapy."

First of all let me say that without a healthy prayer life there will be no healthy Christians, and if there are no healthy Christians there can be no healthy churches. For that reason it is essential that we teach our churches and our church members to have a healthy prayer life.

I am going to ask you to look with me at three prayers in the Old Testament that, if adopted as examples of how to pray and what to pray for, would lead all of us and all of our churches to have a truly healthy prayer life. The Bible is filled with many wonderful prayers to which we could turn, but these three provide enough models for us to transform our own prayer lives and those of the churches that we serve.

First of all, there is a model for *Personal Prayer*. It is found in Psalm 143:10, a verse that has become my new life verse since I "discovered" it several months ago. I have read the entire Bible through 17 times and the Psalms many more times than that, yet I never saw this verse until recently. I don't think that it is a recent amendment to the Holy Bible so that means that I just never noticed it on my earlier journeys through this particular psalm. This time it seemed to levitate off the page in order to arrest my attention and to focus my spirit on its contents. The verse says, "Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness."

In my mind this verse contains all that any individual needs to have a very healthy prayer life. Let's analyze it very closely in order to see and appreciate all that it contains.

The very first word is "teach." It is in the form of a request. Before any of us can request to be taught anything, we must humble ourselves before God and acknowledge that there is something important that we do not know how to do. If



Sam Owens

we never come to that point we will never reach out to God and say, "Teach." We men who are already infamous for never stopping to ask directions when lost may find this quite difficult, but it is a necessary step in praying the prayer in this verse of inspired Scripture. We must ask God to teach.

Then let's take note that the psalmist said, "teach me." This is so important because it is easy enough to ask God to teach someone else. "Lord, teach our pastor; teach our deacons and elders; teach our Sunday School teachers, our small group leaders, our music leaders; Lord, teach that busy body who is always interfering with things." It is easy to ask God to teach others when all along it is we who need to be taught of God.

"Teach me" what? "To do Your will." This selection of words demands our most focused attention. Usually we hear individuals praying that God will teach them to know His will, and that is the end of it. What good does it do if we know God's will and do not do it? Not knowing God's will is not the problem with the world today, not doing it is! It is easier than most people think to know what God's will is. It is written throughout the Holy Bible just

so we can know it. All we have to do is study God's word, and we will discover what His will is.

Let's be honest. Satan knows God's will better than any of us. Does he do it? No! In fact he has spent his entire existence opposing God's will. Now, if you and I do not learn to do God's will and then exercise ourselves in doing it, what does that say about us? It says we are following Satan's example more than that of the Lord Jesus. Christ dedicated Himself at all times to doing, not just knowing, the will of His Father, and we should do the same.

Now let's turn our attention to the words "your will." Why is this important? We are all by nature self-willed people; we are wired from birth to do our will, not God's. This tendency began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and it has flowed down through all the generations of the human race to each and every one of us. We need to do God's will, not our own, if we are to ever count for anything in the Kingdom of God.

The next clause in the verse says, "for You are my God." That means that we are confessing that we are not god, as much as that may hurt. We are not His god, but He is our God. That simple acknowledgement should resolve instantly the question of whose will we are going to do. If we insist on doing our own, we cannot say in truth, "for you are my God." We make ourselves lord over Him by imposing our will over His. If He is our God, and He is, our will must submit to His.

Then the psalmist wrote, "Your spirit is good." That is at once a statement of the obvious and at the same time recognition of the essential. Because God's spirit is good we can trust Him to teach us to do His will, to enable us as we do it, and to look over us while we do it. It does not mean that we will always be safe here on earth while we do God's will. Many of our fellow Christians in many parts of the world could testify that doing God's will often leads them into great peril and suffering. However, it does mean that doing God's will is going to ultimately be worth whatever it costs us in this life. Once we arrive in heaven we will be richly rewarded for our sacrifices. Why? Because God's spirit is good, and He will not allow any of our good works to go unrewarded.

The verse concludes with this prayer within a prayer – "Lead me in the land of uprightness." Hebrew scholars tell us that the original word translated "in" can also

be translated as “into.” I believe both to be appropriate. First of all we want God the Good Spirit to lead us into the land of uprightness. This He does at the moment of our salvation. After that we begin to learn what the Israelites learned after their liberation from Egypt and their entry into the Promised Land. The battles begin now. Once we enter into salvation we must know that Satan will attack us at every turn. For that reason we need God’s Good Spirit to lead us in this land of uprightness. None of us can make it through on our own. We are subject to veering to

ing, ‘Because I bore him in pain.’ And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, ‘Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!’ So God granted him what he requested.”

Without analyzing this entire passage let’s look briefly at four things contained in it that should be the heart’s desire of every truly Christian church. Jabez prayed first of all, “*Oh, that You would bless me indeed.*” Do our churches not need God’s blessings upon them? In this so-called post-Christian

no boundaries. I am convinced that this truth means that Jesus wants each of His local churches to expand in many different ways. We should pray that God will enlarge our areas of interest, that He will expand our outreach, that He will increase our success in evangelism, that He will multiply our victories, and that He will stretch our visions. We should pray that God will enlarge our hearts, magnify our love for the world in which we are placed, and increase our hunger to see the lost brought into the kingdom.

I don’t know about you, but I have been over-exposed to the kinds of prayer meetings that take place in most churches. We gather together for a season of prayer, and we begin to hear the prayer requests. One wants us to pray for Aunt Susie who is suffering with a hangnail; another wants us to pray for Uncle Bob whose rheumatism is acting up; another wants us to pray for little Mary who has a difficult exam in school this week, and on and on they go. People who are the children of the Great God Who spoke the universe into existence and Who upholds it with the power of His word pray such little, insignificant prayers that we tend to make Him out to be as small as we are. Now, I am not saying that those other things should not be lifted in prayer; in fact, they should. But, should that be the limit of our church prayer meetings? Should we not from time-to-time pray real God-sized prayers, the kind of prayers that acknowledge His greatness and grandeur, His awesome power, His ability “to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20)? I think that every church should routinely pray this kind of prayer. Through this kind of praying God would absolutely be glorified, and we would see Him doing great things among us.

After that, Jabez prayed, “*that Your hand would be with me.*” Do you know any church that can fulfill its glorious, eternal mission if the hand of God is not with it? I don’t think it is possible. We need the hand of God with us at all times and in every situation. Without it our churches are like a bunch of empty gloves; we have the right form, but we lack any power. Once the hand is inserted we gain awesome ability to do many things. Without that hand we are useless.



the right or the left, falling down along the way, or giving up on the journey. We need a guide who can see us through all the difficulties that will confront us in this wonderful land of salvation. Prayer therapy is the secret to having that guide.

The next prayer we want to look at is what I call the *Parochial Prayer*. This is a prayer that I wish every church would pray consistently. It comes from a prayer in the Bible that has become quite famous. It is called “The Prayer of Jabez,” and it has been studied in depth by churches all over the world since Bruce Wilkinson published the book by that same name in the year 2000. It is presented in the book as a prayer for an individual, but I would really like to see it become the prayer of all our churches. It is recorded for us in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 where we read, “Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, say-

ing, ‘Because I bore him in pain.’ And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, ‘Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!’ So God granted him what he requested.”

Then Jabez continued, “*and enlarge my territory.*” This phrase can be accurately translated “expand my borders.” It has to do in the spiritual realm with enlarging our sphere of influence. I have a problem with churches that are content to maintain the status quo. I do not believe that there has ever been a time when Jesus Christ was content with things just the way they are. I believe that Jesus desires, and has stated as much, that His church embrace the entire world as its territory, that the borders of His church know

→ The church of Jesus Christ is engaged in supernatural spiritual warfare. We cannot hope to compete without supernatural power. That power comes only through the hand of God with us. Let's learn to pray for God's hand in our midst always.

Finally Jabez asked of God, "that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain." Probably many would think that no church of the Lord Jesus Christ would ever have to pray such a prayer, but I think I would disagree with that. We have in common with Jabez both a past and a potential that we should not ignore. First of all we are told in verse 9 that this man was named Jabez because his mother "bore him in pain." Was there pain involved in the birth of the New Testament church? We need only go back and read the Gospel accounts of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Our Savior to know that His church was birthed in great pain. We have that past in common with Jabez. It doesn't stop there, however. Perhaps knowing that he had caused great pain at his birth this man wanted God to keep him from causing further pain. How does this relate to the church? Because of what Jesus suffered on the cross we know the great suffering caused by sin. That knowledge should cause us to want to overcome sin in every way that we can. The church that ignores the lost sinners around it, that consumes all its energy internally with nothing left over for the outside world is, I think,

guilty of causing pain. By neglecting our duty to share the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ in every way possible with all people possible we are causing them ultimately great pain. Many of those who we overlook will spend eternity in a devil's hell because we did not enlarge our borders enough to include them in our ministries. Every New Testament church needs its own Hippocratic oath in which we vow "to do no

harm." Then we need to pray as a church body that God will help us overcome the trap of apathy that can cause such great pain.

Third, we turn to what we will call the *Praise Prayer*. In 1 Kings 8 King Solomon is in the process of finally dedicating the great temple that will bear his own name. Prayer was part of that dedication ceremony, and we will look at the part of that prayer contained in verses 22-30: "Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven; and he said: 'LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts. 'You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day. 'Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, "You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me." 'And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father. 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this

temple which I have built! 'Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: 'that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, "My name shall be there," that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. 'And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive.'"

This was certainly an occasion for *high praise*, and that is just what Solomon rendered unto God in verses 22-24. The magnificent temple, quite possibly the most expensive and luxurious building ever erected on this planet, was complete. It was now ready to house the worship of the God of Israel. Praise was totally appropriate. Solomon reminded Jehovah that there is no god anywhere like Him who fulfills all His promises to His people. The temple that had been promised to Solomon's father David now stood in all its opulent glory there before them as proof that God keeps His word. Not only had God fulfilled His promise, He had fulfilled it lavishly.

Don't we, the church of the crucified and resurrected Lord, have more reason to praise God than Solomon had on that day? Everything about that temple of Solomon was nothing more than a symbol of the true glory of God that would be revealed in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. By His sacrifice God has now erected on the earth – well – us – His glorious church. While the temple looked forward to something great, we, the church, look backward to a covenant fulfilled, a promise kept, the greatness of the One True God displayed as never before. It may be hard to grasp, but every congregation of born-again believers has far more reason for prayers of praise to Almighty God. Every time you and I look at ourselves in a mirror or see another Christian we are looking at the greatest miracle God has ever performed, and that should incite praise in our hearts.

After those three verses filled with praise, Solomon began to make requests of God. One might ask, "Well, was the praising over? Was it that short?" I would suggest that the answer is a resounding, "NO!" I would suggest that instead of ending the praise, this royal prayer now stepped up from *High Praise* to *Higher Praise*. Think about it for a moment. As a parent are you most highly praised when your child comes to you and says, "Thank you for the new shoes," or when that child comes and says, "Dad, Mom, teach me to tie these new shoes"? I think we feel more glorified when our children express their dependence upon us and their faith in us. It is good to hear words of praise and gratitude from time to time, but it is better to see that our children have complete confidence that we will do for them that which is right. So it is, I think, with God. It is correct that we express verbally our praise for Him. That is *High Praise*, but I believe it is *Higher Praise* when we fall on our knees in humility and brokenness before Him and tell Him that we are completely dependent upon Him, that we are trusting fully that He will continue to do as He has always done.

In closing allow me to say that I believe that if Christians and churches would commit to following these three models in their individual and group prayer lives we would have nothing but healthy churches. Let us reflect on these, and then let us say with the disciples of old, "Lord, teach us to pray!" ■

Should we not from time-to-time pray real God- sized prayers?

IBC Approves 2012 Budget and Recommended Constitution Changes



Photo by Stewart Maxwell

Messengers to the 48th Annual Meeting gather in Rome.



Erik Nielsen prays for new president Sam Owens.



IBC's own worship leaders form the praise team.



Officers: Treasurer Bob Hnat, Clerk Lorraine Stringer, President Sam Owens, Vice President Scott Corwin, Past President Erik Nielsen, and General Secretary Jimmy Martin.

■ **The International Baptist** Convention voted to approve a 411,259 Euro budget for 2012, representing a marginal decrease over the 2011 budget, as part of its business sessions at its 48th Annual Convention Meeting, held 24-27 October at the Rome Baptist Church, Italy.

Messengers to the ACM also approved recommended changes to the constitution which included adding a provision for churches which are the results of IBC LEAD team church plants to be associate members of the convention; clarifying the term of service for the past president and the election of a vice president should that position become vacant; adding additional wording to the general secretary's job description based on his covenant with the convention; and changing the make-up of the executive sub-council and executive council based on the changes approved to the Operations Manual by the executive council.

During the first business session, Vice President and President-Elect Sam Owens was inducted as the new IBC President (see related article on page 6). Owens, pastor at Aviano Baptist Church, Italy, had been elected during last year's ACM. During the final business session, Scott Corwin, pastor of Berlin International Baptist Church, Germany, 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. Erik Nielsen, pastor of First International Baptist Church, Copenhagen, Denmark, will serve as Past President.

In other business, convention messengers approved the nominations for the ministry teams; the grant of the Missions Endowment Fund, totaling \$55,000, to Immanuel Baptist Church, Madrid, Spain; and heard reports from the general secretary, the Executive Council and the ministry teams.

Alistair Brown was the keynote speaker during the ACM (see related article on page 5). His theme was "True Grit – Effective Ministry in a Tough World."

Seventy-nine messengers representing 29 churches were part of the business sessions.

Next year's ACM will be held 26-29 October at Berlin International Baptist Church, Germany.

The Executive Council of the IBC met on Monday afternoon before the ACM. The Executive Council is composed of



LEADing the IBC in



The Executive Council holds its first web-meeting.



the officers, ministry team coordinators, and regional coordinators of the convention. During its meeting, the executive council discussed and approved changes to the Operations Manual. These changes include the formation of two new ministry teams – the Church Planting Ministry Team and the Church Support Ministry Team; the dissolution of the Plans and Policy Ministry Team and the Education Ministry Team; and the addition of two at-large members to the executive sub-council. The IBC Women and IBC Men auxiliaries also became ministry teams. Duties and responsibilities for the regional coordinators, ministry team coordinators, vice president, and past president were also enhanced. Teleconferencing guidelines as well as the provision of email voting were also included.

On 7 October, the Executive Council held its first web-meeting. Using software that allowed video as well as audio conferencing, the Executive Council met to discuss the recommended changes to the operations manual and constitution as well as the recommended budget and Global Missions Offering recipients. No business was conducted during this meeting as no quorum was established. ■



IBC Women enjoy a traditional Italian meal.

■ **IBC history was made** on 27 October when 18 men of four LEAD teams met in Rome, Italy, to develop strategy and goals to plant new IBC churches in the coming years. LEAD Teams are teams of four to six pastors and other church leaders who have joined together to lead their churches, and all the churches of the IBC, to accomplish the specific mission of planting new churches. LEAD is an acronym that stands for *Learning, Encouraging, Achieving, and Dreaming*. These are the principles that drive both the elements of our meetings and our church planting efforts. Currently, the IBC has four LEAD Teams: the Nordic-Baltic team, the Northern Europe team, the Southern Europe team, and the Latin America team. We are eagerly looking to add more members to our teams, as well as, start up new teams.

Our strategy as we move into the coming year is built on four BIG Moves: 1) Identifying “Hot Spots,” 2) Spotting Church Planters, 3) Matching the Planter to the Place, and 4) Beginning a Church Planting Prayer Initiative for 2012.



photo by Debra Evetts

Members of the Northern Europe LEAD team discuss potential “hot spots.”

Move #1 – Identifying “Hot Spots”

Incorporating our knowledge and experiences, we collaborated to identify what makes a Hot Spot hot. In other words, we identified the basic criteria required in a given location that would make for the probability of a successful plant of an English-speaking International Baptist Church. Some of the criteria identified were, obviously, an English-speaking population, as well as, a lack of evangelical churches in

IBC Church Planting Goals for 2012

- Identify 20 “Hot Spots”
- Complete 4 Feasibility Studies
- Identify Specific Places to Find Planters
- Hold 5 LEAD Team Meetings
- Get 4 Planters in the “Funnel”
- Facilitate a Church Planting Prayer Initiative
- Hold 1 LEAD Team Captains’ Training
- Launch 2 new churches – Panama City, Panama and Darmstadt, Germany

to Church Planting

the area, economic growth, English-language military presence, international corporations and universities, and cooperating churches in or near the location. We identified our top 20 “Hot Spots” during our meeting in Rome.

The real work in identifying hot spots comes next. Our task leaving our meeting was to conduct feasibility studies. Our feasibility studies will be accomplished in three parts. First, we’ll collect initial demographic data and information and seek to establish contacts in the location we’re researching. Second, we’ll do an onsite field study. We’ll travel to the prospective location and meet with key people and verify previously gathered information. And third, we’ll do an analysis of the information in respect to the degree of risks that might be involved in planting in that location. We’ll render an official report with all the information gathered, the analysis performed, and a recommendation for action on that site.

Move #2 – Spotting Church Planters

“What does a church planter look like?” This was a question we tackled during our LEAD Team meeting. Fortunately, much has been discerned and written about the necessary skills, gifts, and character qualities of successful church planters. A cursory search on the internet will lead you to dozens of lists. Most of the lists however are in reference to planting churches in the U.S. One list we found especially interesting and applicable to our international setting was the result of a survey of pastors associated with church planting in 52 countries. This survey identified the top five characteristics in order as 1) Leader/Visionary, 2) Missionary Heart, 3) Preacher, 4) Generalist (can do many things as the lone pastor), and 5) Family Man. Our task is to acquire an eye for spotting potential church planters.

We also began the task of identifying specific places to look for potential church planters (such as seminaries, universities, associations, networks, and our own churches). We discussed some creative approaches to advertising and recruiting. Finally, we set forth a comprehensive and systematic approach (called the “funnel”) to bring potential church planters from initial contact to a series of assessments, to church plant proposal, to formal call, and then to church planting.

Potential “Hot Spots”

1. Grafenwoehr, Germany
2. San Miguel de Allenda, Mexico
3. Florence, Italy
4. Pristina, Kosovo
5. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
6. Munich, Germany
7. Stockholm, Sweden
8. Helsinki, Finland
9. Mannheim, Germany
10. Tallinn, Estonia



The Latin America LEAD team discuss potential places to find church planters.

Move #3 – Matching the Planter to the Place

Once we have an assessed and formally called church planter and a viable church plant site, the objective before us is to match roughly the right person to roughly the right place. There will always be risks involved with the planter and the place. Our task is always to identify the risks and manage them the best we can. Matching the planter to the place is a three-part process. First, a profile is developed on the specific planter. Second, a profile is developed on the specific place for the potential plant. The two profiles are then examined side-by-side to see if there is a good “fit”. The third part of the process is to, once again, assess risks involved in this particular match. Once we have a good match, we’re ready to plant a church!

Move #4 – Beginning a Church Planting Prayer Initiative

We understand, while we need to develop strategy, make plans, set goals, and accomplish tasks, it is God alone who plants and builds His churches. Some of us will plant and some will water, but only God will make it grow. We must be prayerfully dependant on God. Church planting must be initiated in prayer, covered in prayer, grounded in prayer, surrounded by prayer ... (you get the picture). The newly formed Church Planting Ministry Team of the IBC plans to support, facilitate, and encourage a convention-wide prayer initiative in the coming year. We need everyone to pray because everyone that prays participates in church planting.

Our partnership with Converge Worldwide continues and is stronger and more fruitful than ever. They continue to coach us in the proven principles of successful church planting, and we continue to take what we learn and contextualize it for our international setting. God has great things in store for us all. Together “we are God’s fellow workers.” Let’s plant some churches! ■

Darryl Evetts

IBC Considers Partnership with Moldova Baptist Union

■ **The International** Baptist Conventions is considering establishing a partnership with the Baptist Union of Moldova beginning in the middle of 2012. In preparation for this the IBC invited a pastor to come and share with the convention at its Annual Convention Meeting some of the needs in Moldova.

Andrei Ciobanu, pastor in Vadul lui Isac, Republic of Moldova, shared about the work of his church and the 60 churches he represents in southern Moldova. Ciobanu shared five prayer points concerning the needs of the churches in Moldova:

- New church plants: In Moldova, there are approximately 1600 villages yet there are only 500 churches
- Evangelism: Open evangelism in public places such as schools, camps, VBS

programs, and social projects for the elderly or poor children, are still allowed in Moldova.

- Workers (missionaries and pastors): Approximately half of the pastors and workers in the churches leave the country to go to the U.S., Russia, or Turkey to find employment to provide for their families. Moldova is the poorest country in Europe.
- Financial support for pastors and missionaries.
- Purchased buildings in which churches can meet.

The IBC has been sponsoring two church planters in Moldova for a number of years through the European Baptist Federation's Indigenous Missionary Project. ■



Bill Tully (c.) introduces Moldovan Pastor Andrei Ciobanu (r.)

Global Missions Offering Sunday is 4 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	TWB	PARTN	EP	Total %
2011	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.

The IBC is also looking to plant new churches within the convention. See the related article on page 10 describing the work of the convention's LEAD teams and the vision for new church plants.

The Together We Build offering will

go to Immanuel Baptist Church, Wiesbaden, Germany, to help with replacing the entire gas heating system at the church. One of the two units is no longer working and the second unit – now heating the entire building – needs repairs. The current system was installed in 1973, when the building was built, and a new system will also help with energy efficiency and lower costs. Any additional money received will go to help finish renovations begun at the church.

The Partnership Missions portion (formerly May Missions or Home Missions) will go to the German Baptist Anti-Trafficking Network. Their new project goal

is to utilize Christian networks in the human trafficking destination country to provide a screening service for job and study seekers in the source country. In doing so, this service aims to determine legitimacy of the employment or study opportunity offered and to provide an avenue by which to raise awareness among job seekers of their rights and the potential risks of pursuing work or study abroad. 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. ■



photo left: Immanuel Baptist Church, Wiesbaden, Germany, needs to replace the entire gas heating system.

German Baptist
Anti-Trafficking Network.



Madrid Receives Missions Endowment Fund

■ **The International Baptist Convention** awarded this year's Missions Endowment Fund grant to Immanuel Baptist Church, Madrid, Spain, as part of the Annual Convention Meeting, 24-27 October, in Rome, Italy.

The \$55,000 grant will help Immanuel to add on to their existing building, providing more children's ministry rooms, bathrooms, and other additional rooms. The church has grown from 100 people attending in 2000 to more than 450 people today.

The Missions Endowment Fund was begun by former General Secretary John Merritt and his wife Elizabeth following the death of their son in a car accident. The fund is designed to help churches escape the "rent trap," by helping them to purchase or build their own building. The corpus of the fund is \$1 million dollars. Grants are made each year from the interest of the fund. ■



Immanuel, Madrid, plans an extension to their existing building.

EBWU Conference Helps Women Seek a Spiritual Balance

■ **Approximately 55 women**, mainly from the Baltic countries, gathered in the Olumpia Hotel, Tallinn, Estonia, for the European Baptist Women's Union conference, 6-9 October. Inez Spruit represented IBC Women.

The theme for the conference was "Spiritual Balance," based on Habakkuk 3:19. "The Sovereign Lord is my strength" reminded us that occasionally we can become unbalanced in various areas of our lives, but when we focus on the Lord, He is our strength and enables us to have everything in perspective, even when trials and difficulties enter our lives.

The keynote speakers were Mari Vahermagi and Janice Viinalass who spoke on "Spiritual Balance" and the "Church in Balance" respectively. Both had challenging things to say and for us to take note of.

There were also a choice of four seminars relating to our theme – Communication Skills (Aniko Ujvari, Hungary, and Margun Ware, Norway); Depression (Elisabeth Vekas, Romania, and Inese Dreska, Latvia); Healthy Balance of Work & Family (Mari Vahermagi, Estonia); Keeping Trials on Track (Wies Dijkstra, The Netherlands, and Margaret Brown, Scotland). These seminars were conducted twice giving the participants the opportunity to attend two seminars. Also included in the

conference were times of sharing of the women's work in various European countries. There were times of worship, prayer, meditation, and testimony.

Sunday morning was a very special time. We joined in a prayer walk in the conference room. It was a time of silent prayer, using the prayer requests which had been written down. These were shared among us and at the end of the time were laid down at the foot of the cross. Each woman then picked up a small wooden cross (made by a Swedish pastor)

to keep for herself. We then celebrated the Lord's Supper together. Toivo and Einike Pilli and Helle Liht gave short devotional messages from Scripture and then Toivo led us in Communion.

There was a real sense of the Lord's presence among us throughout the conference, and we praise His name for being at work in our lives, moving us on in our walk with Him. ■

Margaret Brown, EBWU



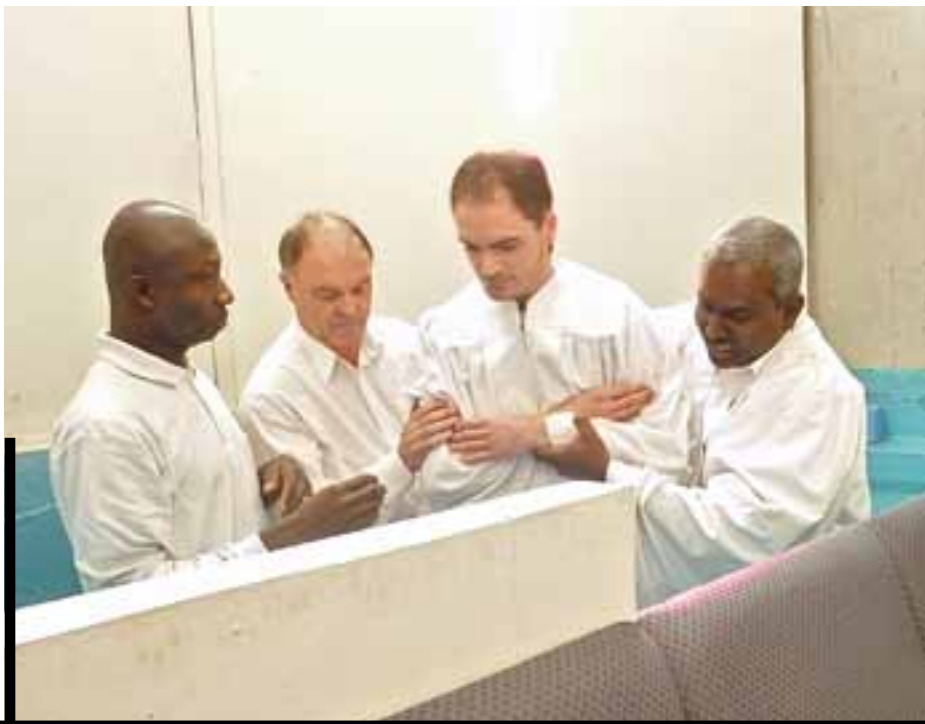
Inez Spruit (2nd left) shares about women's ministry in the IBC.

Frankfurt, Germany

■ **We, the family** of Bethel International Baptist Church, Frankfurt, Germany, would like to share our joy and say that the Lord has been “adding” to us in every sense of the word. We acknowledge His manifold blessings: regular inflow of visitors with some joining as members, a couple of baptisms, and the arrival of baby boy Benjamin and baby girl Whitney. There is a new floor in the children’s rooms and new speakers in the sanctuary. We are praying for a new pastor as well. We have also been able to send the interim pastor and his wife to the IBC’s Annual Convention Meeting and sponsor two singles to the IBC Singles’ Conference in Madrid, along with two others who planned to go.

Join us in praying that Bethel indeed would be a house of God for many as we believe it is and it will be. ■

Johnson Srigiri



Pastor Johnson Srigiri (r.), assisted by the deacons (l.) baptize a believer at Bethel, Frankfurt.

Bremen, Germany

The Glorious Conference

■ *On 22 October*, the women at the International Baptist Church, Bremen, Germany, held a day conference and called it “Glorious.” Why glorious? Glorious is used to describe the throne of God; it is used to describe His works, His Gospel, and His name – the name above all names. We wanted the Lord to be glorified, and we believe He was. Our eyes turned to Him, we worshipped together, and we tuned our spiritual ears to what the Lord was saying through our speakers.

Marion Lewis grew up in Bremen and at the age of 20 left for South Africa for a year-long adventure. She stayed and came to know the Lord after a number of years. She still lives in South Africa with her Welsh husband John. The Lord laid it on Marion’s heart many years ago that she would one day return to Bremen, her home town, and share her testimony of what the Lord has done. What a privilege to hear her story. Marion was living in darkness, living life her own way and dabbling in the occult. Her thoughts became dark, and she slipped into depression. She started hearing a voice encouraging her to take her life. After much despair she went into her bedroom at lunch time, took her husband’s gun, and put it to her head. As she was about to pull the trigger, her husband walked through the door and

stopped her. He had never been home at that time before. He usually worked until the early evening. After seeking help to no avail, Marion went to see a Christian friend who gave her a Gospel book. After reading a few lines she stood up and said “You are my witness; I am giving my life to God right now.” She repented and her life was turned around 180°. Since then Marion’s life is passionate on reaching others for Christ. She has a special love for the Jewish people and has previously worked with a Messianic mission organization in South Africa. Her ministry now to them is mainly intercession. Marion shared miracles and encouraged us that He is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The Lord gave her a Scripture for IBC Bremen and she shared it to build us up in the faith: “Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor” (Isaiah 55:5).

Our second speaker was Lorna Klaas who is a South African. Lorna works amongst the poor, bringing them the Word of God and helping them in anyway she can. One of her ministries is encouraging the homeless people, who live under bushes in a field, to call on the name of Jesus. The police often raid the field and

take away their blankets, forcing them to move from the area. Lorna learnt that if one keeps the feet warm then the body will be warm so she gathered some money and bought these folks socks. Her next aim is to get them thermal vests. Listening to Lorna was like returning to the book of Acts. Her unconventional love and faith in the living God was so evident.

Lorna shared her testimony about how her Jewish husband Morris came to know Christ in the hospital. The doctors tried to revive him as he had “flat-lined,” but they gave up and eventually put the sheet over his head. Morris saw himself floating over a green field towards a black hole. He then heard a voice calling him. He awoke and sat upright on the table to the doctors’ astonishment. He gave his life to Christ that day. Even though Lorna is a widow now, she is radiant with the love of Christ. Lorna had many testimonies to tell us to encourage us to surrender and trust God who is able to do more than we could ever imagine or think. He is the God of the impossible.

What a joy to have these two godly women share with us and spend time praying for us. Since then we have already heard testimonies birthed through their ministry to us. It was truly a glorious day! ■

Penny Faulhammer

Madrid, Spain

■ **Immanuel Baptist Church** in Madrid, Spain, has had a wonderful fall, full of God's blessings and new faces. In September we hosted a Fall Festival to meet newcomers and introduce them to the ministries of the church. After a presentation of ways to get involved, everyone enjoyed great international "tapas" while the children participated in outdoor games and adults visited the different sign-up tables. In October many folks enjoyed a hike to the nearby mountains, which was a wonderful way to get acquainted with new families.

We have recently begun the study *Christianity Explored* to encourage seekers and others who want to confirm their beliefs. This seven-week study is held at the church around the tables with a warm supper served. Forty-four youth and sponsors celebrated a wonderful retreat the last weekend of October in the nearby mountains with the theme "Inside Out" (Rom.12:2). We saw many singles from



Immanuel, Madrid, enjoy a hike in the nearby mountains.

all over Europe (and beyond) at the Singles' Conference hosted in Madrid the first weekend in November. ■

David Dixon

Frankfurt, Germany

"You are beautiful. I know because I made you." God.

■ *This was the message* women at Bethel International Baptist Church, Frankfurt, Germany, took home 15 October. Five intense hours of celebrating the beauty God crowned us with left some women speechless and made others so excited they couldn't stop talking about it. Radiant faces, joyful hearts, and sweet, sweet voices filled our church.

Beautiful hands, beautiful noise and a beautiful soul: each workshop was organized to lead into a deeper understanding of who I am and of God's perspective of beauty. More than 70 Scripture verses were involved during this special women's event to show God's great, great view of every woman He made. Some verses came along with an inspiring devotional, others met the attending women during the workshops, while others were shown in a

video. But all together there was this one single statement, keeping the idea of this event together: "You are beautiful."

A Note from the Heart

I have to admit, it started with a simple prayer. "I can do more. Show me, and prepare it!" Honestly, I am speechless about what happened that day when I just said "Yes" to the Lord. I am more than blessed and still grateful that God listened. I told a friend of mine that this was my awakening. Finally I am doing what I am called to do – 12 years ago!

Only a few days after my prayer, I was hit by the idea of having a women's event. I set a date, I knew exactly what God wanted to say, I had the schedule, and I knew what kind of workshops we would have – within an hour. And my heart was excited! I had to wait, again, but when we finally started organizing it, everything was prepared. We just had to do what was missing – decoration, lots of printing, preparing dinner, inviting, shopping,

God knows the exact time. And I want to be for as long as possible a part of His plan for women building His kingdom. We should be prepared, but before that, we have to know who we are! That's why a women's fellowship is so important. And I am happy to be a part of ours! ■

Heaven Kleinpenning



Bethel, Frankfurt's fellowship hall is transformed into a banquet hall.

San Jose, Costa Rica

■ **One of the blessings** of being a part of an international church is that you get the opportunity to host various groups when they come to visit your country. Through the years the International Baptist Church San Jose, Costa Rica, has been able to do this. Most recently, we were able to have

the Shiloh Gospel Choir from Brooklyn, New York, come and sing at our services. They were excellent, and it was a huge blessing for our congregation.

Some of the other highlights of the last several months have been:

- Our Celebrate Costa Rica Sunday which is a special service that coincides with Costa Rica's independence.
 - A men's breakfast with approximately 35 men attending and hearing a talk on Evolution vs. Creation.
 - A new members dinner for those who have recently joined the church or are interested in membership.
 - Several new home groups and discipleship groups have started.
- We are now preparing for our annual Christmas presentation. This is one of our biggest outreach events of the year. Last year we had more than 100 people from our church participate, and we had a great attendance at all three presentations. We are again praying for a great response from the community as we share the good news of Christmas in a fun and dramatic way. ■

Paul Dreessen



The Shiloh Gospel Choir sings at IBC San Jose.

Freiburg, Germany

■ **There have been** some "Highlights" at the Royal Family International Baptist Church, Freiburg, Germany. One of these was a baby dedication for twins that we celebrated, which was a blessing for all of us. It is a blessing to the heart to see the new lives God created and to see how marvellous He is by the gift of children.

Another point of praise is the celebration of the church's 8th anniversary. It was a Spirit-filled service where we could see God's manifestation and feel His presence. We invited the homeless of the city to take part in the service. We were happy to have

them with us while we praised the grace of God that brought us this far.

The final occasion was the revival that



took place in our Baden-Baden branch. It was a powerful time where the Spirit of the Lord set a number of people free. We thank God that we could welcome some new visitors during this meeting. We believe that God will help this group grow next year, and we pray that our evangelism will lead this city and the region to the truth in Christ Jesus!

We are now preparing to open a branch in Karlsruhe and would appreciate your prayers to accomplish that task. We believe that God will lead and help us to bring the Gospel to the lost in that city. ■

Peprah Kwakye

Bratislava, Slovakia

■ One of the sad things I still struggle with in the international church setting is the regular good-byes we have to make. However, back in the summer, the sadness of saying goodbye to the Christie family was compensated for by the thrill of seeing their two children taking to the waters of baptism. It was in fact the evening before the family left to return to the U.S. As a church family we assembled on the banks of the River Danube on the outskirts of Bratislava. Testimony was given by the two teenagers before they were baptized. But this was not the end.

There is one other family that has been at the International Baptist Church, Bratislava, Slovakia, longer than ours. Lu-

bo has been a member of the church council ever since I can remember. So imagine our surprise when Lubo stripped to his boxers and asked to be baptized. Naturally we had all assumed that he had been baptized years ago. But this was not the case. Lubo, a Slovak, did not want to be baptized in the local swimming pool which we had previously used; the Danube river meant far more to him and was a much more natural venue. What a thrill and an encouragement the occasion was. May God continue to bless and encourage these three as they live for Him. We ended by having a picnic tea together. Isn't this what the first century Christians did? ■

Pete Miller



Bratislava holds a baptism service in the Danube.