

# HIGHLIGHTS

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Core Values

**We Value ...  
Partnership  
and Fellowship**

Jimmy Martin

**We are Family**

Core Strategies

**Mobilizing and  
Multiplying**



# We are Family

*“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Galatians 6:9-10)*



by Jimmy Martin  
General Secretary

I grew up in a large family. My seven siblings were – and still are – quite different from each other in countless ways – age, interests, opinions, etc. Growing up in a family of five boys, our differences frequently became heated; they sometimes still do. I remember having fistfights with my brother nearest in age to me when we were younger. We sometimes referred to ourselves as James and John (our first names), the “sons of thunder,” modeling the negative sides of two of Jesus’ early disciples. But we were family! In spite of our differences and disputes, we knew that we belonged to the Martin family. Today, I continue to care deeply for each of my brothers and sisters even though we are separated by great distances and seldom get to see each other.

Jesus teaches us that we who follow Christ are family. We belong to each other because we belong to Christ. He is the Unifier of the Church. The relationship bond between believers, Jesus taught, goes even deeper than blood ties. It is an eternal bond. On one occasion Jesus’ mother and brothers came to where He was ministering. They sent word for Jesus to come out to see them. Jesus asked, “Who are my mother and my brothers? ... Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:31-35).

The Apostle Paul spoke of Christ as our barrier-breaker and bridge-builder. In Ephesians, he reminded the church, “You are no longer foreigners

and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household” (Ephesians 2:19). This should be the mindset of all God’s people because it is God’s opinion of his church. We are family.

I have been a part of two IBC churches. The members of both churches have become my family. Some of my closest relationships in life are with people of different color, race, nationality, politics, education, and socio-economic background. We are family. Laurie and I host a home group each week made up of people from India, Nigeria, Germany, Afghanistan, the USA, and Great Britain. We are family. My most recent 6-month discipleship triad was with a Nigerian and an Indian. We are family.

This family relationship extends beyond our local church family. In Christ, all believers in every place



The Martin Family.

## IMPRINT

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Cover photo: The Executive Leadership Team meets to plan the work and ministry of the convention by Bogi Photography.

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belong to one another if they belong to Christ. We are indeed brothers and sisters in Christ. My work takes me almost weekly to different IBC churches around the world. I feel a connection with people in each of our churches because we are part of God's family and also the IBC family.

The Apostle Paul regularly reminded churches in the first century that they were connected to each other and responsible for each other. He reminded the Corinthian church of its family duty to assist the Jerusalem church in a time of need: "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be an equality. At the present time your plenty will supply their need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality" (1 Corinthians 8:13). They were not independent churches but utterly dependent on God and interdependent upon one another. They were family.

The IBC is a family of churches. Every member church in the IBC has made a commitment to every other IBC church. It is a voluntary commitment expressed in what we call the IBC Membership Covenant. That covenant is built on a desired relationship of love and commitment first to Christ but also to each other. As you read the IBC Membership Covenant, ask yourself how you can express your love for other believers and other churches in the IBC.

The leaders of the IBC are seeking to provide support and challenge to all our churches this year. You can help us. Prayer, personal communication, financial and practical support, visits, cooperation in evangelism and ministry projects – all these ways and more help to strengthen the bonds to which we have committed ourselves.

I was encouraged recently when a person who has been attending our church for about six months said to me, "Your church doesn't just talk about being a family. You really ARE a family." It is my prayer that we will be that kind of family throughout the IBC. Do your part. We are family. 

## IBC MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

The International Baptist Convention is a family of Christian churches. We commit to work together in a spirit of unity and partnership for the greater good of God's global kingdom glory. We are living, autonomous churches under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, utterly dependent on Him. We are also interdependent churches that rely on and support one another in a spirit of voluntary Christian cooperation.

### **A. AS A MEMBER CHURCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION WE will pursue, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, the following goals:**

1. To regard our sister churches with Christian love; to pray for each other; to aid one another; to be slow to take offense and ready to forgive in a spirit of Christ-like acceptance and reconciliation.
2. To seek the advancement of our sister churches in knowledge, holiness and peace, walking together in Christian love.
3. To contribute voluntarily and regularly to the financial and material support of the IBC and to the spread of the Christian gospel throughout all nations.
4. To invite the Convention leadership to participate in special occasions as well as regular visits to foster good relationship and to assist in times of crisis and transition.
5. To communicate regularly with the Convention by providing information of changes in pastoral leadership, completing the Annual Church Report in due time, and responding to or initiating other necessary communication.
6. To participate in the life of the Convention by attending Convention-wide meetings when possible and serving in ministries of the Convention.
7. To support fully the Mission and Vision of the IBC, to affirm its Summary of Basic Beliefs, and to respect its principles and practices.

### **B. THE INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION will pursue, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, the following goals:**

1. To pray regularly and specifically for member churches and their leaders.
2. To encourage and assist member churches to multiply congregations through church planting.
3. To provide ministries to help strengthen member churches by assisting them to become or remain healthy and mobilized and helping in times of transition and conflict.
4. To assist in empowering pastors and other leaders and potential leaders of member churches to be healthy and effective.
5. To help member churches to build connections with other pastors, churches, and Great Commission partners for strategic Kingdom health and growth.
6. To develop and provide resources – people, training, and financial – that enable member churches to carry out their God-given mission and vision.

# Multiplying Churches: Doing Your Part



by Darryl Evetts  
Director of Church  
Multiplication

**H**ere's our vision: "A movement of global-minded churches reproducing healthy disciples, leaders, and congregations."

Here's our dream: "Churches praying for, contributing to, and supporting an ever-increasing number of church plants to reach people with the Gospel, blessing the communities and churches where they are located."

We have four strategic objectives we believe will help make our dream become reality.

- **Strategic objective number one: Invite every IBC church into church multiplication.**

There is a place for every IBC church to participate in church multiplication. Actually, most churches are already participating with their prayers and cooperative giving. Each church's prayer and financial support is invaluable to our church planting efforts. Several of our churches are participating on our LEAD teams. LEAD teams are teams of leaders from various churches who work together on a regular basis to see new churches planted. We want and need more IBC churches participating on our LEAD teams. We also want to see more LEAD teams established to focus more specifically on particular geographical areas. Your part? Talk to the LEAD Team in your area about participating.

- **Strategic objective number two: Support every IBC church with their multiplication goals.**

Through our LEAD teams and other IBC leadership, we want to come alongside of our churches to help them achieve their personal multiplication goals. Wherever your church is in the multiplication process, we want to support your efforts. It may be that your church hasn't even begun to seriously consider planting a church...we can help you determine your first steps. Maybe you're trying to figure out the location...we can help you. Maybe you're try-

ing to discover a planter...we can help you. Wherever you're at in the process, we are here for you and want to support you. Your part? Invite one of our Church Multiplication leaders to visit your church so we can hear your heart and ideas about multiplying your church.

- **Strategic objective number three: Celebrate all multiplication efforts.**

Multiplying disciples, multiplying leaders, and multiplying congregations are all interrelated. Each is dependent on the other two, necessary for the other two, or the intended outcome of the other two. We want to hear about your multiplication efforts. We want to celebrate your multiplication efforts! Your part? Let us know! Tell us about your efforts. Tell us about your successes. Tell us how God is blessing your multiplication.

- **Strategic objective number four: Trust and follow the Spirit.**

We believe there are an infinite number of models and strategies and approaches to church planting. The one thing that must be the same with every church planting effort is hearing from God and following the direction of His Spirit. We must, above all other things, trust and follow the Spirit of God. Your part? Ask God about your church planting a new church. Invite the rest of your IBC family to join you in your specific prayers.

God is on the move! In the last seven years the IBC has seen nine new churches planted (the previous seven years only one church had been planted). Four churches were planted just last year! We believe there is a great movement of God among our international communities. We want to be a part of it! We want every IBC church to be a part of it! 🌱



Latin America LEAD team  
meets in Panama City.

# Strengthening Churches: Building a Better Body

I feel like before I ask you to read my article, I should introduce myself. My name is Barry Cole, and I have the incredible privilege of pastoring Aviano Baptist Church in Aviano, Italy. Also, this past October, I was blessed to begin service as the Strengthening Churches Core Strategy Director. Gary Preston did an amazing job of getting this core strategy off the ground. He and his wife Suzanne are now retired and living back in Colorado. We're grateful for their service and pray that the Lord continues to use them mightily in this new context.

One of my hobbies is fitness. I won't say I'm a "fitness buff" because that sounds like I really know what I'm doing. I don't. But I do enjoy working out. And I've noticed that some of the elements necessary for a strong, healthy body are also necessary for a strong, healthy church.

## VISION

Before you begin a workout program, you have a vision of what you want to accomplish. In fact, that vision is why you start working out in the first place. That's one of the things a good vision does – answers the question of why we do what we do. When we focus on the why, it not only drives the what and the how questions, but it pushes us to keep going. God is a vision-casting God. And when He casts the vision, it is always God-sized – nothing we can accomplish on our own. His vision for Abraham in Genesis 12 and His vision for the church in Acts 1:8 are just two examples.

These God-sized visions were what drove both Abraham and the early church through the successes and through the challenges. In his book *Visioneering*, Andy Stanley said, "It is amazing what can be accomplished when we wait on God to lead us out. It is equally amazing the mess we can make of things when we charge out on our own." The process we use in the IBC to help churches get a renewed sense of God's vision is called ReFresh. As the name implies, it's a process to help your church leadership reorient yourselves on why you do what you do and where God is leading you. I'll put my contact information at the end of this article so if you are interested in ReFreshing your sense of God's vision, let me know how Strengthening Churches can help.

## CARE AND FEEDING

Now certainly if you are going to achieve any kind of success while working out, you have to have proper rest and proper nutrition. When I was younger, a friend and I decided we were going to hit the weights hard and really bulk up. If you know me, you would never have guessed that. Skinny and scraw-

ny define me physically better than muscular and bulky. What happened? In my case, it was improper care and feeding. I pushed and pushed and didn't rest enough, and my diet was atrocious. Not a good combination. Proper care and feeding is necessary for churches, too. God has called pastors to do that for the congregation (1 Peter 5:2). But who does it for the pastor? Most of us have heard the quote, "A healthy church begins with healthy church leaders." That's not a cliché – it's reality. This year, we've formed a team of pastors to reach out to fellow IBC pastors to celebrate victories with you and pray with you for challenges. Pastor, if we haven't contacted you yet, we will soon.

## HELP TO COME ALONGSIDE

There's another reason I didn't make any progress in the gym all those years ago. It's because I was a 21-year-old with a bunch of passion but no clue as to what I was doing. I imagine I might have been so much more effective if I'd just asked for help once in a while. I'm not suggesting that you don't know what you're doing in your ministry. But let me let you in on a little secret – everyone needs help now and again. And here's another one – it's not a sign of weakness to ask for it; it's actually a sign of wisdom. Timothy had Paul to do this for him. Elisha had Elijah. Joshua had Moses. The role of Strengthening Churches is come alongside churches who need help with strategic planning or conflict management or who just need some encouragement. That's a wide net to cast, but if you (church leader) or your church are struggling and you need someone to come alongside you, that's what we're here for.

I think we all recognize that God doesn't need us to accomplish His mission. And that's what makes it so special that He allows us to serve. The Strengthening Churches Core Strategy is here to help churches serve Him in the best way possible. I promised my contact info and here is it. If you want to start a conversation about how you can make your ministry stronger, email me at [strengthening@ibc-churches.org](mailto:strengthening@ibc-churches.org). God bless you and the work you do for His kingdom. 



by Barry Cole  
Director of Church  
Strengthening and Pastor,  
Aviano Baptist Church



# Empowering Leaders: Learning from Others



by David Fresch  
Director of Empowering  
Leaders and Pastor, North  
Sea Baptist Church,  
Stavanger, Norway

**E**mpowering Leaders Core Strategy is up to some exciting things! First off, we are really excited to see many of you in Dubai at the Global Church for a Global World (GCGW) conference, which is serving in place of our Ministry Leadership Conference (MLC) this year. One of the ways we grow as leaders is to be exposed to new ideas and new people, and GCGW promises to do just that. We will get to meet international church leaders from different backgrounds, locations, and church networks, which I believe will benefit us immensely.

I realize that we are a convention of Baptist churches, and I am unapologetically baptistic. But as we come together in Dubai we will have pastors and church leaders from Union, charismatic, non-denominational, and other backgrounds. While we will not agree on everything, it is good for us to know what these various leaders are doing around the world, and we will hopefully learn something from them. For example, the Assemblies of God churches are very active in establishing international churches right now, and many of theirs in Europe are thriving. They also have an incredible network of churches in China, giving access to a country that is growing more closed off every year and seriously increasing persecution of Christians. What are they doing right in the area of leadership that we can learn from them?



Most of our churches are located in Europe and Latin America, so it will be exciting to talk with international church leaders with churches in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. GCGW will have pastors coming from places like Mali and Thailand. Some of these leaders, like IBC friend Rodney Woo, even come from Baptist churches that are not affiliated with our convention. They face very different challenges than we do in our contexts. In places like the Middle East and Muslim countries in Asia like Malaysia, Christian leaders must be very careful how openly they talk about their ministries, and witnessing to locals is forbidden. These church leaders can share modern-day stories of martyrdom that have come out of their churches. How do they overcome such challenges and still have churches that thrive? What can we learn from them to apply as leaders of our churches, mostly in “Christian” nations, to help our people be on fire for sharing the Gospel like our Christian brothers and sisters in closed countries?

While we love to be together as a family of churches, it will be wonderful to be a part of a larger conference with representatives from the Chinese International Fellowship, the Fellowship of European International Churches, the Missional International Church Network, the Asia Baptist Network, and more. We will have time to be together with just our church family on Tuesday evening, but it will also be good to mingle among the other churches and see and learn from what they are doing as church networks to work together for the Gospel.

This will be an incredible time for us as an IBC family, and I look forward to our time together. But I know we will also miss the relaxing schedule we are used to, and so I am pleased to announce that plans are already underway for MLC 2020 in Croatia. We are looking at meeting at an incredible resort for a time of rest and restoration as we focus in on equipping IBC leaders to accomplish our mission and realize the IBC vision of strengthening and multiplying disciple-making churches. 



Photo by Peter Poogle from Pixabay

Dubai is the site for 2019 GCGW Conference.

# Building Connections: Multiplying Disciples through Missions

*“I listened to Jonny tell his story of finding Jesus and realized I can do that, too.”*  
Alex Adebayo

Alex and Jonny were sitting around the table at McDonald’s – after a great round of laser tag – with two other teenagers listening to Jonny share his testimony. One of the other teens had never heard a fellow teenager talk about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jonny is one of the members of the youth team of six people from First Baptist McKinney, Texas, that joined IBC Berlin for a week-long Youth Missions Project in early March. It was a busy but rewarding week of ministry and missions. Alex is one of the 19 IBC Berlin teenagers that participated in the week’s events – youth fellowship, youth small group, preparing and serving food to the homeless, inviting the neighbors to IBCB’s Easter events, and a youth outreach. The week was carefully planned to be a short-term missions experience designed to multiply disciples who share their faith.

One aspect of IBC’s Building Connections Core Strategy vision is: connecting churches in cooperative ministry and missions for the purpose of multiplying and mobilizing disciple-making churches. Church-to-church missions partnerships like this Youth Missions Project can help you multiply and mobilize disciples!

Evangelism in our local context is nurtured by evangelism in another. Missions projects are a practical outlet for people in our congregations to engage in intensive evangelism activities. Sharing your faith elsewhere emboldens you to share your faith back home, and hosting a team opens doors for you to share your faith with your friends.

Disciple-making is intensified through missions partnerships. Shared experiences of equipping, learning, sharing, and serving have a way of strengthening our connection with God and with others. God accomplishes a lot in our lives through focused time, deepened community, and increased conviction.

But you know this! You’ve experienced it through your own short-term missions partnerships. What would happen if our IBC churches partnered together in cooperative ministry and missions partnerships? Could it accelerate our shared vision of becoming a movement of disciple-making churches? With whom can you partner in a ministry/missions

exchange to the benefit of both churches? What local ministry/missions projects are you already doing? What missions projects are you engaged in? Could you invite another IBC church to join you?

If you would like to explore connecting with another church in a mutually beneficial ministry/missions partnership and need some help, contact Scott Corwin ([connections@ibc-churches.org](mailto:connections@ibc-churches.org)). If you would like to take on the challenge of an existing missions partnership, check out these opportunities below:

*Vacation Bible School and Children’s Camp – Olaine, Latvia:* Our European Baptist Federation Mission Partnership (EBF-MP) partner has invited us to bring a team to support their outreach ministry to children and families in the summer and fall of 2018. We need at least two IBC churches who can take a team – one in the summer and one in the fall (see related article on page 15).

*English/German Language Camps – Hungary:* Hungary Missions in cooperation with the Hungarian Baptists have invited us to join their evangelistic outreach into local schools by teaching English/German in their week-long Bible camps (June 21 – July 14). Church teams choose their own week and curriculum. Team size is dependent upon the Hungarian partner church. For more information, visit [www.hungarymissions.com](http://www.hungarymissions.com).



by Scott Corwin  
Director of Building  
Connections and Pastor,  
International Baptist  
Church, Berlin, Germany



# Developing Resources: Taking Advantages of Resources Offered



by Judith Lynn Maxwell  
Director of Developing  
Resources

In September the Developing Resources team launched a subscription service for RightNow Media (RNM) for all International Baptist Convention churches. Since that time more than 40 of our churches have taken advantage of this offer and provided this resource to members in their churches. Others are still in the process of launching.

This convention-wide offer is providing a way for smaller churches who could not afford their own subscription to take advantage of what is proving to be a very valuable resource. Churches are using RNM in their small groups, in their children's ministry, in their outreach events, and in many other ways. If you are using RNM in a unique way, please let us know so that we can share this with other churches.

One of the tools that RNM provides is a way for each church to set up its own library and list of recommended resources known as channels. A church can have as many channels as they would like and can change them as often as they would like. As a reminder, once a church has set up their library, they can make this the landing page in RNM for their members.

rightnow MEDIA

Another tool that RNM offers is the ability for a church to set-up a "drip" email campaign. This allows you to send timed emails to your RNM participants highlighting selected media items. If you need assistance with either of these tools, please contact your RNM assistant or the Developing Resources team at [resources@ibc-churches.org](mailto:resources@ibc-churches.org).

On a related note, don't forget to visit the Recommended Resources page on the IBC website. We add new recommended resources on a periodic basis. The password for the site is: [ibcresources](http://ibcresources.com). Check out what is there as well as on the related IBC Resources page. If you would like to see other areas added to the page, please let us know and we will look for specific resources to add. 

## ANNUAL CONVENTION MEETING

21-23 October 2019

Il Faro International Baptist Church  
Naples, Italy

Afternoon tours include a Taste of Italy  
Culinary Tour Cuisine and culture come  
together in Naples!



Photo by FreePhotos from Pixabay

Walking in the Light

# Euroventure 2019 Extended by a Day

We are very excited about what we expect to be a great week at Euroventure 2019. We're so excited that this year we've made it one day longer. Usually running from Saturday through Thursday, this year we will end camp on Friday morning. Dates for Euroventure are 13-19 July.

Euroventure is designed for students who have completed 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades or the European equivalents (ages 12-19 years old) and is held in Grindelwald, Switzerland. The theme for this year is "Walking in the Light."

To make it easier for those further away to attend camp, we are offering a 25€ discount per camper for those from churches outside of southern and central Germany and Switzerland.

Euroventure is filled with a good balance of spiritual growth, physical activity, fun and games, fellow-



ship, and worship. This summer we will once again offer some amazing activities during the week of camp, including canyoning, a ropes course, and hiking in the gorgeous Swiss Alps.

The speaker for the week will be Justin Wevers. Wevers and his wife Amanda live in Minneapolis – a city in the northern United States. They have three energetic daughters (Madison, Evelyn, and Kenzie) that keep their house messy and their hearts full. Wevers now serves as the ReachStudent director for the Evangelical Free Church of America after having served as a pastor for high school students for a number of years. He really enjoys sports and spending time outside being active. In the cold Minnesota winters, he passes the time with movies, coffee, and books. He's so excited to join us at youth camp!

In addition, we will have a team of volunteers from Oklahoma Baptist University and Hannibal La-grange University and churches throughout the U.S. and Europe supplying leadership in the roles of small group leaders, break out session teachers, music, and drama leaders.

Euroventure is a unique camp bringing English-speaking students from nations all over the world for a camp that for so many has become a place of spiritual growth and a place that lifelong friendships have been formed, right in the heart of Switzerland in the middle of God's majestic creation of the Swiss Alps. 

#### COST:

Before 1 May: 275 €

1 May: 295 €

1 June: 315 €

1 July: 335 €

Two or more family members attending save 20 € each.

All Sponsors pay 275 €.

Online registration is available at <http://ibc-churches.org/events>.



Justin and Amanda Wevers

# We Value ... A Series on Our Core Values

*Editor's Note: Our core values show who we are and what motivates us. This is the second of a three-part series on our core values, written by leaders of the convention.*

## Partnership: Participating WITH



by Nick Howard  
IBC Vice-President and  
Pastor, Immanuel Baptist  
Church, Wiesbaden,  
Germany

One of the core values of the International Baptist Convention is partnership. I don't know what you think of when you hear that word. If we were honest, I think we would have to admit that our thoughts would typically go to a couple of uses of that word that may not completely express the real meaning behind this important concept.

As a pastor, I receive numerous invitations every week to "partner" with someone. I am told that there is a need and that partners are being sought to help meet this need. Now, I have no doubt that in the parts of the world from which these requests often come, there are significant needs. However, because I don't know the person who is writing, I am left uncertain whether or not they are the best equipped or motivated to meet that need. As you might guess, I am rarely inclined to accept that opportunity to partner with that person, even though there may be a very real need.



Of course, I have also been guilty of looking to my ministry partners, especially those organizations with whom we partner, as simply resources from which I can draw. I ask about the benefits of our partnership and have even been guilty of asking (even if indirectly), "What can you do for me?" I want to gain from the partnership and want to know clearly what I might gain if I enter into this partnership. In these types of conversations, I may find myself doing a cost / benefit analysis of the partnership to determine if I gain more than I would be giving.

How different the biblical concept of partnership is. Writing to the church in Philippi, Paul writes: "I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with joy for all of you in my ev-

ery prayer, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5). Looking at these verses, I find that Paul's understanding of partnership is very different than the ways in which we may see that term expressed in our day.

### Partnership is expressed within the context of relationship

Paul knows those with whom he sees himself in partnership! They are not strangers from whom he simply wants to receive something; these are people with whom he has walked and been engaged in ministry.

### Partnership is first and foremost a spiritual concept

Paul prays for those with whom he is in partnership. He knows there is no cost / benefit analysis which drives the partnership, but rather there is a spiritual bond which drives him to his knees on behalf of those whom he remembers fondly and knows will face both challenges and joys. His prayer for the Philippians is one of the clearest signals of true partnership.

### Partnership benefits all involved

Partnership is never a one-way street. Paul is grateful for the support of the Philippians, but he also knows how they have benefitted from his ministry. The lives of Lydia, the Philippian jailor, and untold others have been forever changed because of Paul's willingness to sacrifice and to share the Gospel wherever God led him.

When you read that the IBC has partnership as a core value, I hope you will not begin a cost / benefit analysis in your mind. Instead, I hope there will be faces of individuals who come to mind spread throughout the world. People with whom you are in relationship. People who care about you and your church. People who pray for you on a regular basis and know the challenges and joys which life brings. I hope you have experienced the benefits, not because someone wanted something in return, but because that's who we are. We are partners in the Gospel. 🌍

## Fellowship: Participating IN

As someone raised in a missionary family, whose father was a pastor and whose family was consistently the very last to leave church each Sunday, I have always been fluent in Christianese – that language unique to evangelicals. We native Christianese-speakers can forget that those visiting or new to the family often have no idea what we are talking about. There may well be a need for a Christianese primer or Rosetta Stone program.



The truth of the matter is, however, that those fluent in Christianese often use words and phrases that we ourselves do not fully understand. “Fellowship” is such a word. When evangelicals mention “fellowship” they are usually referring to something generally positive, vaguely relational, and if they are from certain regions of the United States, pertaining to potluck dinners. And while *fellowship* may indeed carry positive connotations and describe relationships formed and deepened over shared meals, its primary definition eludes us – and our churches are poorer for that fact.

According to theologian and scholar J.R. McRay, the best way to understand the meaning of the Greek word usually translated in Scripture as “fellowship” (*koinonia*) is the word *participation* (see “Fellowship” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*). If we replace *fellowship* in our religious jargon with *participation* (or *participate*), we will soon realize that it is a neutral word which, if divorced from its object, leads to meaningless, silly phrases. With chagrin I admit that I have announced to our church, “After the Christmas celebration we will have a special time of participation (fellowship) in the patio.” In a similar vein many churches have “participation halls” or extend “the right hand of participation” without

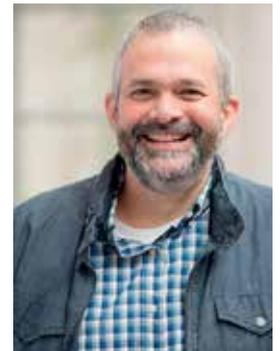
considering in what they are participating!

Given its neutrality, fellowship for Christians is not always a good thing. Its virtue or vice does not lie in the simple fact of participation, but rather in that in which we do or do not participate. Paul warns Timothy not to *fellowship* in the sins of others (1 Timothy 5:22), while Peter writes that through God’s promises we participate (read *fellowship*) in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

If participation in the divine nature were not enough, God has also called believers into participation with Jesus Christ, His Son (1 Corinthians 1:9), and into the participation of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14). In Philippians 3:10-11, Paul expresses his longing to fellowship in the sufferings of Christ so that he will also share in His resurrection. 1 John 1:7 describes the unity among believers that stems from “walking in the light” – that through this discipline we genuinely participate in the lives of our brothers and sisters.

As a family of churches, the International Baptist Convention values fellowship because without participation within and among our churches we could not hope to fulfill our mission – to mobilize and multiply disciple-making churches. Within our churches we have the privilege of participating together as individuals in repentance, in worship, in work, in bearing each other’s burdens, in prayer, in service, in vision, and in mission. At the same time we participate corporately as local bodies in upholding one another, in providing for each other, in praying for our churches, and in giving generously. As an aside it is interesting to note that Paul repeatedly uses the word “fellowship” (*koinonia*) to describe the action of individuals or churches providing for others who are in need (for example Romans 12:13, 15:26). This is a concrete way of participating in the lives of individuals and churches.

But above all, we choose to fellowship among our churches in order to meet the vision that God has entrusted to us. It will be impossible for us to be a “movement of global-minded churches that are reproducing healthy disciples, leaders, and congregations” if we do not do this together. Fellowship is not passive...it is an action and a choice. So let us choose to fellowship together in this vision – to the glory of God and the furthering of His kingdom. 



by Nathanael Fawcett  
IBC Vice-President and  
Pastor, Calvary  
International Church, Sao  
Paulo, Brazil

# Only in Christ are We Unshakeable

*"He is my fortress, I will never be shaken." (Psalm 62:2)*

A weekend at the Rehe Christian Centre, nestled in the middle of the woods with a captivating landscape of the still beauty of nature, was a spiritual treat to the mind and soul as we meditated on the inspirational theme "Unshakeable!" An interesting and enthusiastic group of approximately 220 international women from all parts of the world took part in the conference. The conference was a spiritual breakthrough in understanding the core message that "Only in Christ are we Unshakeable!"

The three days were interesting and entertaining, focusing on the Word of God

lives. Kim leads the women's ministries in her church and speaks at various women's events, both in Canada and internationally.

Kim walked us through different sessions focusing on the truths of how to be unshakeable when the world around us is constantly changing and the ground beneath us is unstable and shaking. We are left with questions such as.....What do you hold on to in tough times? What is the foundation of your life? What do you believe? Why do you believe? How do you come to that conclusion? Do we have answers for these questions? What do these

world we will experience pain and suffering and often it's not our fault. Being a Christ follower does not mean that we are not part of tragedy and pain. We can call on the One who loves us. We are unshakeably loved. He sees our pain and hears our cry. If we pay attention, God will remind us that "He sees us." His purpose is not to cause us pain, but He can make the pain purposeful. When we take our questions to Jesus, He personalises His response to us. God's ways are not our ways. His timing is not our timing. When we trust and have faith in Him, He will show up for us!



through music, seminars, testimonies, prayer time, and fellowship with sisters in Christ. It was a time to detach ourselves from the daily routine and immerse ourselves into a "spiritual spa." Our hearts were calmed down in the presence of God the Father as we sang praises to Him; our minds were enriched with the wisdom of His Word as we dived into the pool of His unshakeable truth; and our souls were rejuvenated by the Holy Spirit.

Worship music, led by the talented team of Nicola Munster, Naldy Veldhuis, Wendy Penggu, and Esther Garcia, was spirit filled as we poured out our hearts in worshipping the sovereign Lord who is worthy of all our praises.

Kim Blackaby, our speaker for this conference, is a Christ-follower, pastor's wife, middle school teacher, mom to three great kids, and student of God's Word. She has served in churches both in Canada and Norway and has a passion to teach women how to draw the life-giving water necessary to lead spiritually and emotionally healthy

questions mean to someone who does not believe in God?

Christ is the answer to our questions. He answers the biggest questions in life. Jesus is our strong foundation, and we can be secure in His arms.

## UNSHAKEABLE IDENTITY

Sometimes we have an identity crisis, asking the question "Who am I? The world is obsessed with identity. Do we clearly know who we are? Are we totally confused? We get our identity from our creator. We women are created in the image of God, to rule over creation alongside men as partners in a joint commission. We are "EZER." This Hebrew word means helper, but it strongly emphasizes one who supplies strength and performs vitally important and powerful acts of rescue and support.

## UNSHAKEABLE PRESENCE

When the family of Lazarus were mourning his death (John 11), they knew whom to call upon for help – Jesus. In a broken

## UNSHAKEABLE FUTURE

Our unshakeable future is believing in Christ and looking forward to eternal life with Him in Heaven. He has promised to prepare a place for us in heaven, free from curse and sin. Our death on earth is just the beginning of the bigger story of life eternal in heaven, where we can walk on streets of gold and be part of the Holy City!

There were five seminars offered for spiritual enrichment: Restoring Kingdom of Vision of what God can do through Women in the Church by Lana Packer, Gladness in the Gloom by Naty Tully, Managing Conflict Effectively by Didi Openova, Five Love Languages by Carol Griffin, and Developing a Deeper Prayer Life by Hope Stockman.

The seminars highlighted several aspects of our walk with the Lord in our daily life situations. They helped us focus on love, relationships, being a woman of purpose by serving Him in different ways, restoring peace and dealing with conflict with the wisdom from God, and spreading the fragrance of Christ among others.

This conference has been a blessing to all who attended in understanding the Christ-centered unshakeable truths on which to build our foundation!

*Leena Sundaram  
Emmanuel Baptist Church  
Hoensbroek, The Netherlands*

# Men's Conference – Impressions



photos by Jerome Ferrin

## Made to Relate, Not to Isolate

Worldwide, a living-room couch points to a TV screen. Today, we take pride in a screen that shadows us wherever we go. Our phone. We basically carry the living room throughout the day. Hence, we find it hard to unplug from this pixelated screen, since smart minds turned the phone into a beautiful melting pot of TV and computer.



Photo by Jan Vasek from Pixabay

But, if only we had a healthy balance toward that blueish screen.

I love my phone. What's not to like? It's got more answers than I have questions. We talk to it; it talks back. It's equipped to connect people worldwide. It can take us to our destination. We pay bills. We order food. We express ourselves. Even an introvert is only a finger-tap away from voicing themselves in front of an audience in a football stadium. (No stage fright to work through.)

Yet, this accommodating technology can subtly take over our lives through uncontrolled screen time for adults and children. Unfortunately, there are too many Christ-followers mesmerized and trapped by it.

### WHAT'S TOO MUCH?

- When you're with the family and everyone is spending quality time with their phone, instead of encouraging one another (or even sharing the Gospel).
- When the only way to have fun or be entertained is by squinting your eyes into a screen; no more walks and talks; no more board games; no more outdoor activities; no more good books to read; no more making Valentine chocolate with your nieces; no more good belly laughs.

- When we read our Bible on our phone, and we get distracted by the 'bing' of a text message, and we tend to that disruption immediately.
- When our life falls apart because we forgot our phone at home.
- When we fight to stay grateful and struggle not to compare because of someone else's 'picture-perfect' life as posted online.
- When our fingers get antsy and constantly check how many likes and hearts we got.
- When we stay long enough to write a nasty comment.
- When our children can't eat without being entertained.
- When our children struggle staying still in church without playing a game.
- When our children respond in anger because the modern babysitter has been taken away from them.

Excessive screen time steals creativity, disconnects us from reality, holds us captive to lazy habits, enables isolation, enhances solitude, eliminates conversations, controls the mind and body, authorizes sin, applauds narcissism, and creates addiction.

Yes, that same device used with wisdom and discipline can be a great resource in countless ways to enhance productivity and godliness. John Piper suggests that we should see the technology as, "A friendly pack mule on the way to heaven. Mules are not kept for their good looks. They just get the job done."

Yes, let's listen to sermons as we drive. Let's sing along while we work. Let's listen to Scripture being read when possible. Let's call family and friends to encourage and build them up. Let's accomplish tasks to save time for the more important things in life. But, let's not become slaves of our 'pack mule' on our way to heaven.

The Apostle Paul says it beautifully in 1 Corinthians 10:23 (Amplified), although its context talks about a contemporary issue to them: "All things are lawful [that is, morally legitimate, permissible], but not all things are beneficial *or* advantageous. All things are lawful, but not all things are constructive [to character] *and* edifying [to our spiritual life]."

May we give ourselves the freedom to blacken the screen with intentionality because we were made to relate, not to isolate.

*"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil"* (Ephesians 5:15-16, ESV).

Naty Tully, for the IBC Women's Team

# Partnering Together to Touch Lives

**O**skars Lulis is one of the church planters supported by the International Baptist Convention through its partnership with the European Baptist Federation's Mission Partnerships. Lulis, his wife, and two small children serve in Olaine, Latvia. Having graduated from the Baltic Pastoral Institute in May last year, he has been able to serve full-time as a church planter since then.

Summertime means camp time in Olaine. Lulis along with some outside help organized four different camps – a camp for kids and their foster families; an art, music, fun camp for kids; a Christian-focused camp for families; and a Vacation Bible School (first time in the area).

The art, music, fun camp for kids was an overnight camp with the kids staying in tents. Linard, a

young boy attending this camp, asked the group to pray for his uncle who was working in the U.K. and had been found unconscious at his flat. The camp prayed for Linard's uncle and the next day, they got the message that he was well enough to go home. Afterwards Linard's mom wrote to thank the group for praying and she actually volunteered to do crafts at the autumn Vacation Bible School.

That is what these camps are all about – touching lives with the hope of Jesus Christ. Lulis is hoping that through our partnership, IBC churches will volunteer to help with their two different Vacation Bible Schools (see related article on page 7). They need two teams – one for summer and one for autumn. [G](#)



Family and children's camps provide a way to touch lives in Olaine, Latvia.

## General Secretary Search Committee Working

**T**he General Secretary Search Committee met on 20 February to continue moving forward in the search for the next general secretary of the International Baptist Convention. The group worked on developing questions and creating ways to receive feedback from various groups within the IBC. As a result, churches, IBC leadership, and staff have heard from the committee asking for their input and response. The input from within the IBC is crucial to the profile development process.

Using video conferencing, the committee will be meeting every few weeks to work through the process of selecting the next general secretary. In between meetings members will do work individually and report back to the team.

As the team continues to meet, they will move through a series of stages, including develop a profile, publish the position/gather resumes, narrow the field, conduct a local visit, and present a candidate to the convention.

Team members are Nick Howard, team leader, (Wiesbaden, Germany), Jendi Korpi (Panama City, Panama), Danilo Bozza (Naples, Italy), Rodrigo Assis da Silva (Frankfurt, Germany), Scott Corwin (Berlin, Germany), Parker Windle (Paris, France), and Dina Dreessen (San Jose, Costa Rica).

*Jendi Korpi*

## From the Editor's Pen



It seems that you are never too young to enjoy reading *Highlights*. William was recently spotted reading the November edition at International Christian Fellowship, Oberursel, Germany.

Does something seem to be missing from this edition of *Highlights*? Did you notice it? There IS something missing. We have no News from the Churches. For the first time in many, many, many years, we didn't hear from you. And because of that, we are all a little poorer.

We want to hear from you! We want to hear about the good things that are happening in your churches. We want to celebrate with you. We want to pray with you when there are concerns and issues. On several occasions, I've gotten messages from people who write to say, "We love getting *Highlights*. It allows us to know what is going on in the churches and how to better pray for them." For many, it's like being able to do a prayer walk through the countries of the IBC – praying "onsite" with insight.

Each time we do *Highlights*, our designer does a rough draft as we see how much material we have and how many pages to print. I love it when he says, "We have lots of news from the churches so we need to use extra pages." It was sad this time, when he sent the rough draft and the last two pages were empty.

So how can you help? We print *Highlights* three times a year – usually after the Ministry Leadership Conference, after the summer conferences (like Euroventure and Connect), and after the Annual Convention Meeting. We printed this one a bit earlier than normal as MLC is much later this year (and perhaps that is the problem – you were expecting the deadline to be after MLC – not before!). Deadlines for submitting articles and photos usually happen about a week after the event. But you don't have to wait for the deadline; you can send your articles and photos as soon as you think about. I'll simply save them until the next edition.

But, you say, "I can't write very well." That is okay too. Send me your information and I'll polish it up for you. That is what an editor is supposed to do.

Let's fill the pages of the next edition with "News from the Churches."

*Judith Lynn Maxwell*  
*Highlights Editor*

## PASTOR PROFILE

ROBERT (BOB) WENIGER – International Baptist Church, Zurich, Switzerland



WIFE: Daniela

CHILDREN: Two adult married children in the U.S. – Maddie and Christopher

YEARS AT CURRENT IBC CHURCH: 9 months

OTHER IBC CHURCHES SERVED: This is the first IBC church I have served. However, I have served three other international churches: in Bolivia, Venezuela, and Malaysia.

BRIEF PROFILE OF YOUR CHURCH: The International Baptist Church

of Zurich (located in the suburb of Rüslikon) was officially organized in 1996. We meet in the chapel of what was once the International Baptist Seminary in Rüslikon. We are blessed with members (and many children!) from approximately 25 different countries. Our vision is: Belonging (we offer a church "home away from home," where people can be included, loved, valued, and cared for), Growing (we offer opportunities for all people to grow in their relationship with Christ), and Going (we take the Gospel with us wherever we go, living as Christ's witnesses in our families, communities, places of work, and sometimes even to far-away places). We are grateful for the love, joy, concern, and fellowship that mark our congregation.

WAYS YOU ARE INVOLVED IN THE IBC: Having arrived just nine months ago, I am not yet directly involved in the

IBC, although my wife and I attended and very much enjoyed the retreat for new pastors and wives. Right now, my focus is on getting to know this congregation and learning German (required by Swiss law). At a later time, I hope to be involved in some way with the IBC. OTHER MINISTRY INTERESTS: Since my university days, I have had an interest in and commitment to missions. I have been part of numerous short-term mission projects, and we were involved in mission work for several years in Russia.

PERSONAL INTERESTS AND HOBBIES: My wife and I enjoy taking walks daily. I have always been interested in following current world events. I love reading and cooking (when I can find the time!).

FAVORITE/LIFE BIBLE VERSE: Romans 12:1-2