

Africa the new center of Christianity

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An
African
group
sings at
the
Baptist
World
Centenary
Congress.
(Photos
by Ferrell
Foster)

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By Tony Cartledge

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BIRMINGHAM, England (ABP)-The center of Christianity has moved to Africa, and Baptists can be catalysts for changing the continent, Frank Adams told delegates to the Baptist World Centenary Congress.

Baptists are called to be a voice for the voiceless and bring hope to the hopeless "as we realize our identity, our dignity and our dynamism," said

Adams, the Baptist World Alliance regional secretary for Africa.



Three South Africans join in worship
at the congress.

With Samuel Agyei of Ghana as worship leader, African choirs and Caribbean-style drummers contributed to a jubilant evening of celebration. Worshippers sang, clapped, waved their hands and danced in the aisles.

Solomon Ishola, general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, contributed to the ongoing congress theme of “Jesus Christ, Living Water” with a sermon on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit as the “living water” that flows through those who trust in Christ.

Using John 7:37-39 as a text, Ishola said the empowerment of the Spirit flows from the Lord when believers express an intense desire for him. Too many churches, seminaries, unions or conventions have experienced spiritual drought and famine because they have not sought the Lord with diligence, he said.

Ishola suggested five results of experiencing the living water of Christ's Spirit—an overflow of the Christ life, the accomplishment of God's will, the anointing needed to share the good news, the grace to live sanctified lives and the ability to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

The session also included reports from the Caribbean and from Africa by

regional secretaries Peter Pinder and Adams, and a final report from Tony Cupit, retiring BWA director of evangelism and education.



Solomon Ishola, general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, addresses the congress.

Cupit emphasized the power of the gospel to transform lives, recalling his personal experience as a missionary in Papua, New Guinea. BWA serves to bring together people who otherwise would not know each other, he said. Cupit called for BWA members always to be evangelistic, reaching out with courtesy to all people as they tell of Christ, the Savior of all.

Pinder said work in the Caribbean has been challenged by natural disasters and a cutback in personnel by British-based BMS World Missions and the Southern Baptist Convention's Inter-national Mission Board.

Assistance with disaster relief and partnerships with other groups, such as Virginia Baptists, are proving helpful, he said.

Many churches are experiencing a transition in worship and leadership styles, he said, leading to both progress and confusion. "Pray for what Baptists will become" in the Caribbean, he said.

Adams was more upbeat about work in Africa, where he said the All Africa Baptist Fellowship now encompasses 53 unions, 40,000 churches and 6

million Baptists. “God is at work among Baptists in Africa,” he said. “This is our time, a time to win Africa for Christ.”

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