

SBC president, BWA general secretary address African-American Fellowship

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LEWISVILLE—The first African-American president of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Jamaica-born general secretary of the [Baptist World Alliance](#) challenged [Texas Baptists' African-American Fellowship](#) to face life's storms as faithful followers of Christ.



Fred Luter, the first African-American president of the Southern Baptist Convention, described God's faithfulness even when Hurricane Katrina forced him and his church members from their homes in New Orleans for seven months. (PHOTOS/John Hall/Texas Baptist Communications)

SBC President Fred Luter, pastor of [Franklin Ave. Baptist Church in New Orleans](#), and Neville Callam, general secretary of the Baptist World

Alliance, addressed the fellowship's 20th annual conference.

Christians will encounter storms in life such as loss of a job, divorce, children going astray or depression, Luter told the group. Or maybe they will be literal storms, such as when Hurricane Katrina forced Luter and his church members to evacuate New Orleans for seven months.

On television, Luter saw his church and home underwater. He struggled to understand why God would let such things happen to people who tried to follow God, even though people who didn't seem to care about Christ continued partying on Bourbon Street. Luter acknowledged he didn't want to read his Bible, pray or preach.

During that time, Luter learned Christians must cling to Christ's promises, remember his presence and rely on his power to carry them through difficult periods. In the Bible, Jesus' disciples became afraid on the boat when a storm started. The disciples, fearing for their lives, woke Christ. Jesus calmed the storm and rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith.

"When the storms of life are raging, you must remember the promises of Jesus," Luter said.



Neville Callam, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, addressed the Texas Baptist African-American Fellowship's 20th annual conference.

Christ is a shepherd who protects and provides for his flock, he added. No matter how difficult the situation, Christ is fighting for his people.

"Whatever you need him to be in the warfare, whatever you need him to be in the battle, he will be that and more," Luter told more than 800 people at the conference.

As Callam travelled the world with BWA, he met people who have encountered terribly devastating storms and clung to Christ as Luter described. In the Ukraine, Callam met a 102-year-old man who spent 10 years exiled to Siberia. Rather than lament his time in there, the man thanked God for giving him the opportunity to share the gospel with people who needed to hear it.

In another part of the world, Callam met a young man who had sought to become a communist leader. One day, the man met an evangelist who shared the gospel with him. It altered his life. He changed his plans and headed to the closest seminary, located in another country. He arrived with only the clothes on his back. The man enrolled in the seminary and looked forward to taking the gospel back to his home country.

In Azerbaijan, Callam met a man who was imprisoned for sharing the gospel. Callam recalled his testimony about the experience: "God sent me because there were many people there who needed to hear the gospel. I did exactly what I was supposed to do. One is getting baptized this weekend."

"It doesn't matter what you face," Callam said. "It doesn't matter the circumstances. Everyone experiences the goodness of God."

During the James Culp Banquet held in conjunction with the fellowship meeting, Callam described life as a journey during which Christians are commanded to make disciples for Christ. That means during the routine acts of life, Christ-followers are to look for ways to share the hope of Christ with family members, co-workers and people they meet, he said.

"God has called us," Callam said. "God has given us the Great Commission."

In business, the fellowship elected President Michael Evans, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Mansfield; Vice President Oscar Epps, pastor of Community Missionary Baptist Church in DeSoto; Secretary Ponce Brown, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in El Paso; Assistant Secretary Glenn Samuels, pastor of New Millennium Baptist Church in Lubbock; Treasurer Marvin Delaney, pastor of South Park Baptist Church in Houston; Assistant Treasurer Elmo Johnson, pastor of Rose of Sharon Baptist Church in Houston; and Parliamentarian Joseph Parker, pastor of David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Austin.

The fellowship also passed a resolution on marriage, holding that the Bible affirms marriage as being between a man and a woman. The resolution also noted the Bible "consistently affirms that any sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage between a man and woman is both sinful and self-destructive."