

BWA President Msiza emphasizes the church belongs to God

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ZURICH, Switzerland—Paul Msiza, president of the Baptist World Alliance, stressed in his report to the BWA General Council that “a church can never be an institution owned by human beings.”

The church “belongs to God,” said Msiza, senior pastor at Peniel Salem Baptist Church in South Africa, adding, “When the church belongs to Christ everyone has a place.”

The president reported that Baptists around the world “are doing well. ... Our focus on mission is exciting,” he said. And, “as Baptists we are committed to a holistic approach that involves both “word and deed.”

“We still preach Christ crucified, we still believe in evangelism, and this is who we are.”

‘Stand in the trenches with those who suffer’

Baptists also recognize that “we live in a hostile world” and need to continue the work of advocacy—“to stand in the trenches with those who suffer. ... We need to stand for justice” until, like Amos in the Old Testament said, “justice rolls down like waters.”

Msiza noted two things about Baptist churches today. “We are growing and yet there are concerns.”

In many countries there is still injustice, and Msiza noted the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. "We need to cry to God for prophets," like Amos and King, who will speak the word of God and work on behalf of people.

The president also noted a concern for today's youth. He asked why youth were not attending churches. He related a need for churches to change to reach youth, but reminded the crowd, "When we own the church, we have no place for change."

Taking care of business

In other matters, Msiza thanked God "with the same spirit" for Neville Callam and Elijah Brown in his report to the General Council. Callam retired as BWA general secretary last year, and Brown assumed that role at the beginning of 2018.



Msiza, thanked God for Callam's work in "taking us through the years" and making sure there was a smooth transition to the new general secretary. "Now," Msiza said to Brown, "we are so glad to have you lead us."

The president welcomed two new regional secretaries to the BWA leadership—Vee Tetseo of Asia-Pacific Baptist Federation and Jeremy Bell of the North American Baptist Fellowship.

Msiza also noted David Kerrigan had retired as general director of BMS World Mission and Kang-San Tan had been selected for that leadership position.