

IN FOCUS: Southern Baptists miss out on BWA

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I believe it is time for the Southern Baptist Convention to come back to the [Baptist World Alliance](#). The SBC held a leadership role from the founding of the BWA in 1905 until a few years ago, when it voted to withdraw.

At the recent SBC annual meeting, messengers voted to move forward with a Great Commission Resurgence strategy. The International Mission Board has been one of the most effective mission movements ever. Thousands of Baptist missionaries are serving around the world at this time. Yet while we cry for God to call more missionaries, don't overlook the 40 million Baptists who already are scattered throughout the world.

I have known the presidents of the BWA personally over the past 15 years, and I'm a close friend to John Upton, who is the president-elect. They all have preached in churches where I was pastor. They are godly men who love the Lord and the church, are committed to Baptist values and are personal witnesses and Great Commission Christians.

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Nilson Fanini was president from 1995 to 2000. Fanini was a 14-time president of the Brazilian Baptist Convention, founded the Baptist Theological Seminary of Niterói in Brazil in 1984, founded a nationwide project to print and distribute 25 million Bibles in Brazil, founded and hosted a nationally broadcast weekly evangelical television program, and founded Reencontro, a social-service organization that included an orphanage, a daycare center, 19 medical clinics, mobile ambulances for low-income pregnant women, a bakery for needy children and a two-year vocational college.

Billy Kim was president from 2000 to 2005. There were only a dozen members when Billy and his wife, Trudy, began serving at Suwon Central Baptist Church in 1959, and now there are more than 15,000. He translated for Billy Graham during the 1973 Korean Crusade. Each night, the crowd grew to a maximum attendance of 1.1 million. Thousands of people gave their lives to Christ through the crusade, which greatly contributed to church growth in Korea. The Suwon church has hundreds who gather every morning at 5 a.m. for prayer. Its pastor has preached to large crowds around the world during the last several years in evangelistic meetings, seeing thousands profess faith in Christ.

I also could tell stories of David Coffey, who has been president since 2005, and of John Upton and his wife, Deborah, who served as missionaries to China before coming to Virginia Baptists. Several of the BWA staff, including Denton Lotz, the previous general secretary, were members of the church in Virginia where I was pastor. They love Christ and serve his church.

Sheila and I will join many Texas Baptists and thousands of other Baptists from around the world July 28-Aug. 1 at the BWA Congress in Hawaii. We will hear firsthand stories of persecutions, suffering and hardships. But we also will hear of God pouring out his Spirit in powerful transformational ways. It will be a great time of worship, celebration and commitment. I wish our SBC leaders were there to join with us.

Randel Everett is executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board.