

Voices: Four reasons the Baptist World Alliance matters

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The [Baptist World Alliance](#) matters because family matters, global awareness matters, our global mission matters, and so does hope for a global vision of eternity.

Family matters

Family matters to me. Texas Baptists form part of my understanding of family.

In the 1930s, Baptists introduced the gospel of Jesus to my grandmother, Francisca Rodriguez Reyes, in Snyder. A Baptist preacher and Home Mission Board church planter, Rev. Edwardo P. Gonzalez, invited my grandmother and her family to a worship service. The faith she found in Christ also found me and my family.

We connected to churches affiliated with the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

I was called to ministry at Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana of Corpus Christi. Across the years of my ministry, I connected to Baptist associations in Corpus Christi, San Angelo, El Paso and Dallas—all expressions of the Baptist family cooperating for mission and ministry.

I connected to the Baptist Student Ministry at Angelo State University, then enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary—funded through the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention—for graduate theological education for ministry.

I served Baptist churches in Dallas and El Paso, and was blessed to serve as vice president and president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas from 2003 to 2005.

Today, I serve as the sixth president and CEO of Buckner International, a ministry affiliated with Texas Baptists that protects children, strengthens families, transforms generations and serves seniors. I am indebted to Baptists in Texas and the United States in all its forms of family.

Global family

In 2015, I began to engage with Baptists beyond Texas by attending the meetings of the North American Baptist Fellowship, one of the global-regional fellowships of the Baptist World Alliance. NABF is comprised of 22 Baptist conventions in the United States and Canada.

In 2015 in Honolulu, I attended my first Baptist World Congress—a meeting every five years. The Baptist World Congress scheduled for Rio de Janeiro in 2020 was held virtually in 2021.

I attended BWA annual gatherings in Zurich (2018); Nassau, Bahamas (2019); and Birmingham, Ala., at Samford University in 2022.

I was elected as vice president of the North American Baptist Fellowship, serving from 2015 to 2020, then as vice president of the BWA representing Baptists in the United States, serving through 2025 when the Baptist World Congress will be held in Brisbane, Australia.

The BWA has become a broader global family to me.

Global awareness matters

The BWA matters because global awareness matters. We live in a global village connected by the internet, communication and travel. What happens in places far away feels like it is just down the street.

Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine feels like it impacts all of us in the global village. I recall an online meeting with prayers from both Ukrainian and Russian Baptist leaders praying for peace. That is why a global network of Baptists matters.

Today, the BWA is comprised of 51 million Baptists in 246 Baptist conventions and unions in 128 countries. We are all over the planet, aware of each other, and connected by faith, ministry and mission.

Mission matters

The BWA matters because our mission matters. The five key areas of mission of the BWA include:

- strengthening Baptists through worship, fellowship and unity;
- leading in mission and evangelism;
- responding through aid, relief and community development;
- defending religious freedom, human rights and justice; and
- advancing theological reflection and transformational leadership.

The mission of [Buckner International](#) aligns quite nicely with the BWA mission. Our mission is "to follow the example of Jesus in serving vulnerable children, families, and seniors."

My vision for Buckner and our engagement with BWA is:

- to connect BWA members with our ministry in Peru, Honduras,

Guatemala, Mexico and the Dominican Republic to support each other in those places, as well as Texas and the United States;

- to provide a platform for BWA-affiliated Baptist conventions and churches to engage in global mission among vulnerable children and families; and
- to build stronger relationships with Baptists around the world to help them consider ways to serve vulnerable populations in their country.

Hope for eternity matters

BWA matters not only because family matters, global awareness matters, and mission matters but also because hope for a global vision of eternity matters.

The global Baptist network provides a visible demonstration of what heaven will look like.

Consider the Apostle John's vision recorded in Revelation 7:9: "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"

Just imagine worship in the global village among our Baptist family with music, song, testimony, preaching and fellowship from every tribe, language and nation.

The closest I have come to this vision was in Honolulu in 2015 and in BWA annual gatherings in Zurich, Nassau, Bahamas, and Birmingham, Ala. The diversity of the global Baptist family with different cultures and languages gives me hope, broadens my outlook, and gives me a glimpse of eternity.

The BWA gatherings teach me the kingdom of God—the one thing Jesus

taught us to pursue—is not defined or confined by one nation. Rather, God’s kingdom is a global enterprise.

The BWA raises my vision from what matters in my country to what matters to God’s kingdom across the globe.

I invite you to consider planning on experiencing a bit of heaven and a glimpse of eternity in Stavanger, Norway, for our next BWA annual gathering in 2023 or in Brisbane, Australia, in 2025 during the Baptist World Congress. I know of no other gathering like this on earth.

Dr. Albert Reyes is the president and CEO of Buckner International and vice president of Baptist World Alliance-USA.