

Resources for Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Day 2015
Theme: **Jesus is the Door into a New Existence Together**

“Within a trinitarian framework, we explore the meaning and implications of Jesus Christ as the door, using a hermeneutic of ‘Ubuntu’. As the door, Jesus Christ leads us into a new reality that offers a new perspective leading to new experiences and possibilities for communal existence. We probe dimensions of this truth and some of their implications for the way churches in the Baptist tradition understand the faith, order their lives and disciple their adherents. As the door, Jesus opens the way for us to receive one another.” (Ubuntu, for our purposes, may be expressed as “I am what I am because of who we all are.”)

These resources are offered to pastors, worship leaders and churches to help in the observance of Baptist World Alliance Day 2015. Rather than a single service, recognizing the vast diversity of ways that Baptists in the world worship, these are offered humbly to be used in ways that local leaders see best to fit their needs. All resources other than scriptures and hymns are by Gary Furr and used by permission. Congregations are welcome to download and use them with permission.

SUGGESTED BIBLE READINGS:

John 10:1-10, esp. v. 7

Isaiah 43:18-21

Isaiah 25:1-9

Acts 14:21-27

Psalms 96

Acts 10:24-44

SUGGESTED HYMNS

“Blest be the Tie DENNIS

“Christ is the Truth, the Way”

“Christian hearts, in love united

“Diverse in culture, nation, race

“God wills a full life for us all”

“I Come with joy”

“I love thy kingdom, Lord”

“Halle, Halle”

“Jesu, Jesu”

“Let justice flow like streams”

“Lift every voice and sing”

“O, for a thousand tongues to sing”

“They’ll know we are Christians

“We are a people of faith

“We are God’s people”

“We are people of God’s peace

“When we are living

“Where charity and love prevail

DIADEMATA

CASELL

CANONBURY

AZMON

DOVE OF PEACE

ST. THOMAS

HALLE, HALLE

CHERIPONI

ST. THOMAS

LIFT EVERY VOICE

AZMON or BLESSED NAME

ST. BRENDAN’S

HENDRICKS AVENUE

SYMPHONY

TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM

SOMOS DEL SENOR

RESIGNATION

CONTEMPORARY HYMNS AND CHORUSES

“Gather us in”

“Guide my feet”

“Seek ye first”

“Ubi Caritas”

GATHER US IN

GUIDE MY FEET

LAFFERTY

TAIZE

CONFESSION OF FAITH

As Baptists, in honor of Baptist World Alliance Sunday, we remember the affirmations of that gathering of Baptists from around the world in 2005 for their hundredth anniversary of working together for the gospel.

We believe in the one eternal God who revealed Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;

We believe in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, revealed in the Scriptures as fully God and fully human, and whose life shows us the way of true discipleship, was crucified for us and was raised from the dead on the third day to save us from our sins;

We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;

We affirm our life together as a community of faith looking forward in hope to Christ's return and God's New Heaven and a New Earth;

We believe in the scriptures, the written Word of God, fully trustworthy for faith and conduct;

We believe in the church, the community of God's people called to be priests to one another, where the Scriptures are read and studied together. We believe that the church is called to be witnesses to the Kingdom of God. To that end we pray, work and hope for God's Kingdom as we proclaim its present and coming reality;

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

We believe in the church's unity. We commit ourselves to pray and work to further the unity of Christian believers

We believe in the dignity of all people, male and female, because they are created in God's image and called to be holy.

We acknowledge we are corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgement; We believe in the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, who by this love reconciles believers with our loving God;

We do proclaim our love of God's created world and affirm our commitment to the stewardship of God's creation.

We declare that God gives spiritual gifts to believers who are called to live a life of worship, service and mission.

We affirm the Great Commission, every believer, empowered by God, is called to be a missionary, learning and sharing more of Christ that the world might believe;

We confess that faith in Christ entails a passionate commitment to religious liberty, freedom, peace and justice; affirm that in Jesus Christ all people are equal. We oppose all forms of slavery, racism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing and so will do all in our power to address and confront these sins;

We believe the truth is found in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Because we have faith and trust in Him so we resolve to proclaim and demonstrate that faith to all the world. Amen and Amen. Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus, come

--This confession of faith was adapted by Dr. Gary Furr from a statement adopted by the Centenary Congress of the BWA in Birmingham, United Kingdom, July 2005.

CONFESSION OF SIN..... **Setting Loose the Captives**

One: Deliver us, O God, from principalities and powers, from spiritual wickedness in high places. We recognize our complicity in our troubles. But we are also caught in a web that is larger than our own personal lives whose forces originate far from

us. We are also trapped by our own desires, our weaknesses, our poor decisions, our lack of will and lack of energy, and our ambitions that play into the hands of sin and indifference. Free us from those forces and influences to which we subject ourselves, sometimes willingly and sometimes without awareness, that we might know the mighty love of Christ and the liberating power of the Holy Spirit.

All: Help us to know you in truth, Son of God.

One: For those who struggle daily in the grip of lifelong patterns of addiction, and for repentance by those who traffic in their pain and suffering.

All: Help us to be free indeed, as you promised, Son of God.

One: For those whose lives are lived in the shadows of the powers of death and the fear of death. We thank you for the Baptist witness of freedom and pray that we would stand firm, therefore, for that freedom—freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, and religious liberty for all.

All: Help us to know the power of your hope, Son of God.

One: For those who are trapped in cycles of dependency and oppression, from those caught in abusive and lifeless relationships to those drowning in seas of debt and economic anxiety. Break the powers that hold others in financial and political bondage.

All: Help us to know your healing might, Son of God.

One: For prisoners in fact, loathed and rejected by society and forgotten except by the rage of their victims, who have abandoned all hope of new life and redemptive purpose

All: Help us to know your power of reconciliation and forgiveness, Son of God.

One: For the poor of the world and all around us, whose daily lives are consumed by simple survival, and for us who struggle with our material blessings but long to know the greater joy of stewardship, justice and mercy.

All: Help us to find the day of Jubilee, Son of God.

One: For those trapped in deadly and lifeless religion, whether the legalism that robs us of life or the spirit of arrogance that keeps us from fellowship

All: Help us to live in trust and humility, Son of God. Deliver us from the ties that bind us to death and sin, and replace them with holy love, Christian fellowship, life-giving purpose and peace. Amen.

Sung Response

Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.

PRAYERS and RESPONSIVE READINGS

Greeting

One: Welcome in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to worship
On Baptist World Alliance Day!
In this fellowship, used to the sound of singing;
This congregation [gathering] which has seen baptisms and funerals;
This church where people have come to be married,
Or to celebrate the birth of a child;
This place where people have wept, and been filled with joy;
This crossroads where people have wrestled with the deep things of life,
Have prayed urgently, been stirred and changed;
This house of worship where we come and offer ourselves
and our gifts to the work of the kingdom,

We walk through the door to this gathering
But we also come through the True Door, Jesus Christ,
Our Way, Our Truth, Our Life.
A way that opens us to the Kingdom of God
A way that joins us to the world of God's people
A way that brings us into solidarity and unity with believers everywhere.
On this day we ask that our vision be enlarged, our communion deepened
And our gathering be a sign of the Kingdom of God.

**All: In this church where you have so often been with your people,
Be with us now, to open our hearts and minds and fellowship
To new possibilities through Jesus, in Whose name we pray, Amen.**

--adapted from *Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship*, the Baptist Union of Great Britain

A Prayer for Unity

Eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Three in One, One in Three.
Wondrous mystery of one and many.
Two marry and become one.
Where two or more are gathered there are three who are one,
for You are with us.
Out of the many members is one body.

So, on this day when we remember fellow Baptists everywhere
Through the work of the Baptist World Alliance,
Make us one in You.
We are so many! 231 conventions, 121 countries and territories, 40 million members, 177,000
churches. We speak Swahili and Spanish, Polish and Portuguese, English and French, Thai and
every language imaginable.
We are though many and different from one another,

And yet we are one in You,

One in our loyalty and love
One in resolution

One in our gratitude and obligation to you
One in common allegiance to Jesus Christ and his teachings
One in our determination to work together
One in our care and concern for one another,
One in our willingness to share our stories and our means.
One in our fidelity to one another through the journey of life
One in our common need.

**Join us this day, the many, in so many places and ways,
As one in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Pastoral Prayer or Prayer of Thanksgiving for the BWA

Mysterious God
We praise You, God, when we see more than we have seen
 New horizons, new possibilities,
The end of old fetters and limits,
 To open a door and see a glimpse of the future
 To see in the scriptures truth that calls us forward
To find some long lost bit of our common heritage
A neglected truth waiting to be embraced
A tantalizing possibility before us—of how life can be
A new calling, the whisper of the Holy Spirit,
 A better Way than the same old way.
We hear Beautiful Words, Wonderful Words, Wonderful Words of new life

So grant us faithful spiritual eyes to see new visions
Of how to be your people in this confusing time
 People of prayer and steadfast spirit
 People of good works and kindnesses
 People who live out Christian community
 In a way that is bold in its power
But tender enough that a child can understand

We thank you today for the Baptist family across the world
We remember brothers and sisters we have not yet met,
But with whom we share a Savior, a Story, a Hope, and a Cross
 That in the work of the Baptist World Alliance we might know
Not simply affiliation or cause or even kindred
 But the Presence of Jesus Himself, Lord of the Church
Bringing us toward each other, passing deeper into being One
Come to us in unifying power
 And healing love,
That the world might know you through us, who call ourselves
 By your Name.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Ministry of Reconciliation *(New Revised Standard Version, arranged by Gary Furr)*

New Testament Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Ephesians 2:13-22

One: From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.

All: So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

One: All this is from God, to whom we are reconciled through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ,

All: Be reconciled to God.

One: For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

One: But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

All: So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

One: So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,

All: but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,

One: built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;

All: in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

The Peace

Let us offer one another signs of reconciliation and love

(All may exchange signs or words of God's peace, e.g., "The Peace of Christ be with you")

A Prayer for the World God Loves

Lord,

You have sent us out into the world to bring it to you

So that you might make it new

You prayed that we might go into that world

And yet not be of the world in our going.

That's the tough part.

Because a lot of what's wrong with the world is also

What's wrong with us.
We need to be wise in the world
But not worldly wise.
We know that the scriptures warn us that the world
In its rebellion calls your wisdom foolishness.
We do not expect acceptance from our world
Nor do we anticipate that what we do will
Always be valued or understood.
Help us to discern the times, and listen for your voice
Help us to be your witnesses in the world
And tell them what we know because you love them
And we love you, and so we love
What you love.
Grant us wisdom in the world, love for the world
Protection from the world, and courage
As we battle the world, within and without.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR GOD'S "UBUNTU" TO MAKE US NEW

O, Lord,
As Jesus looked down from the cross and even there
Brought his mother and John together as Christian family
As the Holy Spirit brought Peter and Cornelius together
Across culture and suspicion and religious prejudice
And made them one in Christ,
So we see the miracle of church, the miracle of Christian community
The miracle of Divine Ubuntu, where forgiveness flourishes
And life abounds only in fellowship with others.
We ask that You help us to cherish and nourish it with our very selves.
We pray for humility to remember that you have fashioned us
Into your people, and without You we cannot bear together.
Give us your vision to find those who are already seeking you
Already by the power of your holy spirit
And to always be ready to welcome them, love them, help them, and pray for them.
And for all the people of the world, give us a breadth of vision
Hearts that have windows and not shutters
Hands that open in generosity and not closed in fear and suspicion
Feet that walk, minds that are open and engaged with the world
And not merely bogged down in justifications and excuses.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

A BAPTISMAL LITANY FOR BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE SUNDAY

Today, as we observe Baptist World Alliance Sunday, we join in our worship in the act of Baptism, the practice at the heart of our common faith with Baptists around the world, signifying repentance from sin, conversion, and the beginning of discipleship as we follow Jesus.

God's revelation:

Romans 6:1-4

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Our response:

Come into these waters

The story of Jesus is now your story—dying, buried, rising again.

Put it on, let it wash over you, live up to it.

Clothe yourself anew and rise up from death into life.

Follow in the way of Jesus, who went before you.

Seek those things that are above

Strip away all that holds you back

Cuts you off or keeps you down.

Rise up from the waters of the old ways with Jesus into the new creation.

Follow in the way of Jesus, who went before you.

Come out of loneliness into the fellowship of God's people,

Into the possibility of a new humanity.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism in Jesus Christ,

“no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free,

there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

Follow in the way of Jesus, who went before you.

--Gary Furr, based on Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 3:1-11;

Rom. 6:1-11; 1 Peter 3:18-22.

Confession of Sin: Finding the Gospel's Freedom

One: Gospel freedom is God's gift to us. Our discipleship is our offering to God. We understand that our freedom has been bought with a terrible price and asks of us to ever remember its cost that came only through a cross. Let us confess together that we have not always lived our freedom in Christ in the right way. We have refused it for the safety of the world's approval. We have been silent to avoid the world's anger.

All: Forgive us, Lord. Help us to live in gospel freedom.

One: We have preferred the false security of sin, the graceless womb of legalism, and the Christ-denying anonymity of following the herd rather than living courageously. In all

the ways that we have failed to receive the freedom of Christ that is ours, let us ask God's forgiveness and help.

All: Forgive us, Lord. Help us to live in gospel freedom.

All: Forgive us as well if we have used our freedom thoughtlessly and without concern for our brothers and sisters who are new in the faith or struggling in bondage that we don't understand. If we have failed to be good stewards of our influence on others' lives,

All: Forgive us, Lord. Help us to live in gospel freedom.

Cleanse us of fear, faithlessness and timidity and fill us instead with the power of the Holy Spirit. Help us to remember that if Christ has made us free, we are free indeed!

All: Forgive us, Lord. Help us to live in gospel freedom.

Words of Assurance

One: Hear the good news! The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life for the liberation of us all. We have known the truth. And the truth will set us free!

All: Amen.

Benediction

Freely you have been given, freely give.

As you go forth to do God's will in the world,

May the love of God the Father

And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

And the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit be with you always. Amen.

Confession of Sin

All: O Lord, in the brilliant light of the resurrection, every sin is exposed to the light of love and all darkness banished by grace.

One: Every doubt is vanquished and every denial turns to true obedience. In the day of the resurrection we see love demonstrated on the cross and justice vindicated on Easter morning. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

All: We now know that if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

One: We yield our stubborn wills before the truth that sets us free. We release the hurts done to us by others into your judgment rather than ours, that we might be free to grasp this great salvation which is ours. We confess that we are sinners, not in order to live in shame, but that we might be released from its power and filled with new life.

All: Help us to live as resurrection people, now and always, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Prayers of the Church (Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19)

All: I love the LORD, who has heard my voice and my supplications. Because God heard me, I will call on God's name as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, save my life!"

Prayers of Intercession and Petition (*leader may allow time for congregation to voice individual prayers if appropriate, inviting them to end their request with, "In peace, let us pray to the Lord," and the congregation may reply, "Lord, have mercy!"*)

We pray for the church everywhere and its faithfulness in service and witness

We pray for all of God's servants, including leaders and teachers as they guide the Christian community

We pray for the fellowship of believers in the Baptist World Alliance

We pray for peace in congregations and for robust mission to the world

We pray for justice for those who are powerless to seek it

And we pray for the sick, the prisoner, the hungry, and the poor.

Other prayers may be added as appropriate

BENEDICTIONS

Scriptural Benedictions

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jude 1:24-25

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever.

Amen.

Revelation 1:5b-6

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and made us to **be** a kingdom, priests serving his **God** and Father, to him **be** glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Spoken Benedictions

Triune God,

We are fashioned into a people by the power of Your creative love,

Redeemed from the loneliness of sin by the power of Your suffering love,

And kept in communion by the presence of Your sustaining love.

May we your people be one, not by our sameness

But by the power of a common Love and a shared Life.

May the radiance of Your love through us be evident to all.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Go forth to the world, that your lives might overflow with the abundance of the grace of God, to welcome and to heal, to reconcile and offer forgiveness to all, in the power and might of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

You are disciples

As you go to your place in the world, remember that God goes with you.

May the peace of sin forgiven

And the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us

Bring glory to God and strength for the journey.

Go forth in the strength of the Lord to serve the Kingdom!

As our Lord Jesus Christ walked to the cross and not fail to love us unto death, let us be his loyal friends, faithful in our living, faithful in our dying, faithful to each other, faithful in our loving. May he call us friends, not merely servants. Go, and be the friends of God in the world. Amen.

As you go from this place of worship

Go with the love for one another that Christ commands,

And the love of God,

The joy of the Holy Spirit,

And the peace that Christ gives,

Will be yours.

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Acknowledgement

The resources for BWA Day 2015 were prepared by the Rev. Dr. Gary A. Furr. Dr. Furr is the pastor of the Vestavia Hills Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, USA where he has served since 1993. Dr. Furr is a writer, poet, musician (www.garyfurr.com) and teacher. He is co-author of *The Dialogue of Worship* with Milburn Price and writes a blog on music and the arts and faith at www.garyfurr.org. He has served as an adjunct professor in the Religion Department and at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. He attended the centennial celebration of the BWA in Birmingham in 2005 and hosted President Jimmy Carter and was co-chair of the New Baptist Covenant meeting in Birmingham at the famous Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in 2009.

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