The coalition formed by Lott Carey, the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA) and the American Red Cross has spurred relationships in New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Illinois, Ohio, Missouri, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Florida, and Alabama. The goals: build more resilient communities and help individuals and families prepare for and respond to disasters. The Lott Carey Disaster Services Network lists the following areas as priorities:

- **Household Preparedness**—*Be Red Cross Ready*: Train individuals on three basic steps to help them prepare and be ready to respond to a disaster or life-threatening emergency. Get a kit, make a plan, and be informed.

- **Community Preparedness**—*Home Fire Prevention Campaign*: Recruit individuals to support Red Cross National Home Fire Preparedness Campaign to reduce deaths and injuries caused by home fires. Individuals can canvas neighborhoods and share preparedness information and/or help with the installation of smoke detectors.

- **Community Preparedness**—*Pillow Case Project*: Help educate 3rd-5th graders on disaster preparedness and enhance their coping skills in the time of disaster.

- **Volunteer Participation**: Recruit individuals to be able to respond to disasters as volunteers in shelters and/or local disaster assistance team responses.

- **Use of Facilities**: Form agreements for the potential use of church facilities to support Red Cross disaster responses; as shelters, for example.

- **Blood Support Program**: Recruit churches to host blood drives in collaboration with congregational and/or community partners.

To join the Lott Carey/National Baptist Convention of America Disaster Services Network contact Kathi L. Reid, Disaster Services Program Manager, 301.429.3300, kreid@lottcarey.org.
In this edition of the magazine, we pause to highlight the leadership of Lott Carey President Dr. Alyn E. Waller. He completes his three-year tenure at the end of the 121st Lott Carey Annual Session in Atlanta, Georgia, this month. That we are convening in Atlanta for the first time is indicative of Waller’s approach to stretching and innovating.

Last year’s Annual Session was in Birmingham, Alabama—another first for us. It was Waller’s vision to hold our annual conventions in places where Lott Carey’s supporting participation has not been present. This makes it easier for folks to check us out and consider whether Lott Carey’s global commitments and its like-minded missionaries might be a community worth considering for future partnerships. Innovation is a part of the Waller approach. In that regard, he has been right at home. Lott Carey is an innovative network.

We trust that you will rejoice in snapshots of our journey during his presidency. As he completes his tenure, he will join the fellowship of other former Lott Carey presidents. They don’t move on. They move over to make room for the next leader while continuing to support the global partnership network. That’s part of the Lott Carey way.

Waller’s tenure as president has taken place during unusual global challenges. We face mass displacement of refugees because of war, famine, and crime. Natural disasters continue to devastate communities season after season with greater intensity. And international leadership challenges are mounting:

• Zimbabwe faced the forced resignation of its president and has struggled with moving forward politically.
• Liberia had a peaceful election. But the new president is stymied by a declining economy, and there’s little indication that his administration knows how to turn it around.
• The Haitian government tried to eliminate fuel subsidies that benefit the wealthy disproportionately. Its intent was to invest more in health and education. But the immediate reaction triggered rioting and turmoil.

These and other challenges complicate life and work for our partners around the world. But Lott Carey does not avoid challenging circumstances. We serve in some of the toughest places on earth, and our partners are some of the most innovative and resilient people alive. It continues to amaze us how they serve amid trials. Jesus taught us that we would have tribulation in this world. He also taught us to be of good cheer because He has overcome the world. By God’s grace, we will too.

Striving and thriving,

When Will There Be Peace?

“Honest theological exploration and conversation is needed among people of faith—both leaders and followers—rather than the misappropriation of selected scriptural texts that contribute to inhumane behavior and justify evil actions”

Israel was proclaimed as the Jewish state in Palestine in May 1948. The United Nations supported the ideology of Zionism—the religious and political movement that sought to recreate Israel as the center of Jewish identity. Proponents of Zionism claimed that a Jewish state was essential for protection from anti-Semitism (hostility toward Jews). The establishment of the State of Israel is central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that continues today. There is much suffering and injustice in Palestine-Israel. Christians are called to build peace rather than contribute to persecution in a land that should be holy.

Pilgrims from Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society (Lott Carey), a global Christian missions community of African-American Baptist heritage, engaged in a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in Palestine during February 2017. This journey was more than an opportunity to see the beauty of the landscape, marvel at the architecture, and celebrate “walking where Jesus walked and standing where Jesus stood.” It challenged the pilgrims toward deeper and more critical reflection on faith and witness concerning the Holy Land.

Palestinian Christians, Jews and Muslims shared with us their lives and allowed us glimpses into their realities as residents of an occupied territory. We saw, heard, and felt countless injustices faced by the people of occupied Palestine. The mainstream media in the United States inadequately reports these stories. Consequently, great atrocities go unnamed and unnoticed in America. Instead, we receive mostly propaganda that depicts Palestinian people as aggressive,

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Amina Mohammed, deputy secretary-general of the United Nations, at UN Forum on the Question of Palestine.

Commentary

Amina Mohammed, deputy secretary-general of the United Nations, at UN Forum on the Question of Palestine.
The following statement was born from conversation in community about race and violence during the 118th Lott Carey Annual Session that convened 12 August 2015 in Greensboro, North Carolina, USA. We offer this statement as a resource for contemplation, conversation, and a call to engagement.

The notion of race is among the most destructive ideas in history. It prevents living harmoniously and sustainably. Rather than contributing to our capacities to generate ideas, create beauty, analyze problems, and produce solutions, the contemptible notion of race—having no science to support this approach to differentiating human beings—constructs barriers that separate and segregate people. It hinders us from engaging in relationships that strengthen and sustain. The construct of race is manipulative and malevolent. Human beings are created in the image of God. This gift grants us amazing capabilities for creativity and community. We achieve our highest possibilities when we support and share with one another. Communities of collaboration and compassion enable us to live fully and productively. Working together, we help each other to become more of what God made us to be. Tragically, however, we frequently fail to live as we are intended. We regularly retreat behind boundaries of race—a product of human imagination gone horribly wrong. Our notions of race can cause us to sin before God and to injure one another.

Racial injustice has plagued people in the United States from its beginning. Exploitation of human life for profit and power has caused generations of systemic racism and institutionalized hatred. The work of the Civil Rights movement achieved some of the greatest victories, but they have been short-lived. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were designed to achieve full equality and to eliminate institutional barriers to voting. These victories have been undermined by the rise of neo-Confederate and white supremacist groups. These groups are a threat to democacy and to the very idea of justice. They threaten our democracy, our economic system, our social fabric, our communities, and our common humanity.

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PHILADELPHIA—He’s a Renaissance Man with deep roots in Lott Carey.

“I’ve grown up in Lott Carey—literally. All my life,” says Rev. Alyn Waller, pastor of Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church here in the City of Brotherly Love.

The missions pedigree is genuine, owing to his life-long involvement and the list of people who have tracked his journey, including his aunt, Barbara Williams, former head of the Lott Carey youth division, and the master missionary himself—Dr. Wendell Clay Somerville, who guided Lott Carey for 55 years.

“I knew Dr. Somerville. When I was a little boy, he used to preach for my father and grandfather,” he says. “I’ve grown up in Lott Carey, and so I know the benefit of being a missions-minded pastor.”

Leading a 15,000-member congregation with more than 75 ministries is just one of his jobs. Guiding the flock through the complex spiritual, political, economic, and social landscapes of contemporary America would be enough for most. Not for this theologian-musician-singer-author-martial arts expert-extreme sports buff. He uses every gift God gave him. Three years ago, the Lott Carey Kid became the Lott Carey President. His term ends in August, and he is satisfied that his tenure honored God and served the goals of the group.

“Being a part of Lott Carey helped me continue to believe in the larger structure of the church, helped me to believe in the capacity of Africans and African Americans to work together,” says Waller, whose books are sold on Amazon and whose smooth vocals are featured on several music CDs. “I can bring new Christians to the Lott Carey convention and not be afraid that they’ll be tainted. It’s a wonderful place. It’s a family. Everybody is somebody at the Lott Carey convention.”

Waller received his bachelor’s degree from Ohio University in Athens, his master’s from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and his doctorate from Palmer Theological Seminary (formerly Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary) in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. Lincoln University presented him with an honorary doctorate in 2014.

Waller is releasing the reins of the presidency but has plans to continue growing his missions ministries in unique ways. For exam-
ple, Enon’s Athletic Ministry, which fuses sports and spiritual guidance, and produces college and professional players, was recently profiled on CBS News. He talked about his future and his passion for local and global missions with Lott Carey Herald Managing Editor Mike Tucker, who met the prolific preacher at Enon.

Did you accomplish what you wanted as President of Lott Carey?
What I wanted to do was expose the Lott Carey network to the larger Baptist witness. I wanted to expose my peers to the work of Lott Carey. There are a lot of pastors who pastor megachurches but who do not have these affiliations. Yet they have a heart for missions. Doing missions on this level, without the umbrella organization, often leads to failure or inefficiency.

Why is that?
There are a lot of things to deal with in terms of reporting, taxes, money, and international trade. Lott Carey helps negotiate the governmental and cultural issues. Transferring money is one example. When you work through Lott Carey, you just send your money to D.C. (Lott Carey is headquartered in the Washington, D.C., area), and from there Lott Carey handles all the disbursements. Lott Carey also has a full-time executive secretary-treasurer, who has the time to keep boots on the ground, to manage our assets, and to help facilitate the work of the local church.

You’ve said that what makes Lott Carey durable is “the mission is the mission is the mission.” Can you elaborate?
We’re not going to change. We don’t change with presidents. I feel that over my three years, we’ve been successful in doing what Lott Carey does: that is, expanding the ministry of the local church and sharing the transforming love of Jesus Christ around the world. We’ve been able to help other churches see how they can connect with churches in the Diaspora. We have Enon Tabernacle Western Cape, South Africa, and that is a result of working with and through Lott Carey but also expanding Lott Carey’s understanding of how that type of thing can happen. Last year, I took a group of pastors to South Africa so that they could meet pastors, recapitulate what they see us doing, and begin to build their own relationships.

What would you consider your greatest achievement as president?
I don’t know how to measure success in those terms. We do foreign missions right. Kentucky Fried Chicken says, “we do chicken right.” Just because there’s a new CEO at Kentucky Fried Chicken doesn’t mean it starts making steak.

What was your vision as president?
The role of the president is really to inspire commitment to the convention. I think that has happened over these years. I have been able to represent the convention among the larger group of pastors that did not know about the convention before; and help some pastors who have a jaundiced eye toward some of our traditional structures look at Lott Carey again. We need Lott Carey because the church needs to expand its witness throughout the world. We focus on where black people are, where the Diaspora is. We as African Americans are positioned in a way that

Waller in Kenya: ‘We need Lott Carey because the church needs to expand its witness throughout the world.’

Photo: Enon Tabernacle
to help the Diaspora—in ways that maybe no other groups of black people are. It’s important that we recognize our role.

That sounds a bit exclusionary. What about Norway, France, Brazil?

It’s not exclusionary. When the church was commissioned, it was sent into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Jerusalem is home, and then there are concentric circles of concern. I have no problem preaching the Gospel to the world, but I begin in my house. I begin with my people, and I spread. Lott Carey history shows that Dr. Somerville was reaching out to Russians back in the 1940s. It is not to the exclusion of others, it is that we prioritize the Diaspora. We’ve done work in Italy. I’ve preached in Korea. We go where the Gospel takes us.

Besides local mission in Philly and in storm-ravaged Houston, you’ve led revivals and missions to South Africa, Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, India, and Palestine. Why are missions so important to your ministry?

Missions is at the heart of who God is. It’s at the heart of the church—to reach people and help people. You show your love for God in how you treat people. Missions is at the heart of evangelism. If I’m trying to reach you with a message, it’s better to meet your need than to just preach at you.

My Dad was a preacher and use to chide those who muttered, “The Lord will make a way,” as they passed by people in need. He’d assert, “You’re the way!”

That’s exactly right. That’s fundamentally what it is; and that has been at the core of my pastoral ministry. You meet people’s needs. That’s true for the continent of Africa. It’s true for North Philly. We want people to think “glocally”—globally and locally at the same time.

Then going on missions is important to spiritual growth?

I have never taken a person on missions that has not come back a better Christian and better church member. I encourage every pastor: take your people. They need to experience it.

The Other Enon

Enon’s international ministry is worldwide, but Waller is quick to admit “my heart is in South Africa.” That’s because of the dynamic Nomdoes.

The husband-wife team of Jacobus and
Erica Nomdoe co-pastor Enon Tabernacle Western Cape and operate Teen Challenge and Home of Hope, ministries that rescue children, youth, and women from drug abuse, gangs, prostitution, and human trafficking, and offer them safety, spiritual guidance, vocational training, and discipleship.

Both Pastor Waller and his wife are fans of the Nomdoes because of their work and work ethic. The feelings are mutual. In separate interviews, the Nomdoes applauded the leadership of their Philly connection.

“Dr. Waller is a prolific speaker, revivalist, and anointed teacher,” Jacobus Nomdoe asserted. “He has a great understanding of our affairs, especially of the politics and socio-economic conditions.”

Said Erica Nomdoe: “He has the ability to relate to people and let each one feel important. Dr. Waller has never seen any cultural difference. He respects the way we do things and will come alongside.”

“Last point might be the linchpin of their partnership—mutual respect. Waller is emphatic when he says Enon in South Africa is autonomous.

You met the Nomdoes through Teen Challenge and the first lady’s anti-human trafficking activities. What drew you to them?
We saw that they had a heart for the community and a gift for ministry but lacked real fundamental support. We realized that we could have a major impact. We could model something very new and different if we partnered with him (Pastor Nomdoe). We wanted to model what it really means to have a relationship with the church that comes alongside.

You’re not the boss or bishop?
No. I’m their brother.

And adviser?
We get together, we talk about what we can do together. We share a vision of meeting families, addressing issues of drugs, alcohol, and human trafficking. We’re trying to show that this kind of relationship can be headed by American churches. I do have money, but he has things that I don’t. The easy part for me is to come to the table with some money, but we also send our people over there to learn about what is going on. It becomes a shared experience.

What would you be missing if you had not partnered with Enon in South Africa?
The evangelistic zeal of Pastor Jacobus Nomdoe has blessed our church. Every time...
I take someone over there, they come back more on fire for God—just being exposed to what they’re doing in South Africa. The zeal for meeting people at their rawest point of addiction and watching the transformation that happens when they meet Jesus Christ.

So, the Nomdoes were getting their hands dirty before you stepped in?
Absolutely.

That had to be encouraging.
Yes, that was the point. They were already engaged in activities. Sometimes, just the infusion of cash makes a difference. Sometimes money doesn’t fix anything because the thing is broke. But sometimes, the thing is not broken; the thing is working, but it needs money. That’s what this was. Pastor Nomdoe knows what he’s doing and does it well. He needed support. He needed someone who would have his back, and that’s what we decided to do.

Let’s switch gears and look at life after your presidency ends. What’s in the works for Alyn Waller? What’s the thinking regarding missions?
One of the things that I’ve always had a heart for is the development of men. I believe that the church needs to challenge its chauvinism and all of that, but there is still a very particular way that God responds to community according to the men in that community. The health of the church, the health of our community depends so much on the health of our men. My book addresses the issues. It’s titled *Code of the Righteous Warrior: 10 Laws of Moral Manhood for an Uncertain World* and is available on Amazon.

How is this the next push?
I do a lot of extreme sports and martial arts, and so the book includes teachings from my martial arts world, my extreme sports world; training with the Navy Seals; and living in the Amazon with a few fellows and all of the things that we learned through that experience. I went to Thailand and fought Muay Thai and lived in the gym for 10 days. The stuff that we learned from that experience is the stuff that I try to use to teach principles. Showing how being saved and being committed to Christ and in the church is fun and is masculine.

How about politics? How do you balance the church-state mix when you’re in the pulpit?
You must allow the Bible to speak. Jesus was born where he was born because of the politics of his time. Everything that Jesus did had political implications. To be a responsible Christian means to be someone who’s registered to vote, who knows the issues. Jesus is a political figure. You’ve got to understand that there are political implications for everything.
The enormity of the human trafficking problem is incalculable. Many victims are not easily identified and many more are afraid to speak out or seek help. But the first lady of the 15,000-member Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, refuses to give up the fight to help those in need.

"Encouraging people to exit the life is really about continuous presence," says Ellyn Jo Waller, Ed.D., wife of Senior Pastor Alyn E. Waller. Together, the couple and their two adult daughters—Elynn Morgan and Eryka Lynn—established the Charitas Foundation, which funds a non-residential, drop-in center for women who need a place to shower, a meal, or just rest from life on the streets or in bondage. The foundation partners with the Greater Philadelphia Salvation Army's New Day to Stop Trafficking program. "It's judgment-free, no proselytizing. We choose to be Jesus rather than preach Him."

Mrs. Waller's commitment to fight human trafficking deepened while attending a conference on the topic more than a decade ago in Washington, DC. While listening to a presentation by Jacobus Nomdoe (then a youth leader but now pastor of Enon Tabernacle Western Cape in Cape Town, South Africa), the scripture he quoted pierced her heart: "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity." (Psalm 94:16) She said, "It was like the words lifted off the page. I believe it was the calling for me to engage in a significant way in the work to fight human trafficking."

Mrs. Waller, who earned her doctorate at Temple University, heads She's My Sister, the anti-human trafficking arm of Enon's women's ministry that works with a variety of civic organizations to combat the problem. She talked with Lott Carey Herald Managing Editor Mike Tucker during his recent visit to the church.

You've done the research. Fighting human trafficking must get emotional. Extremely.

How then do you measure progress when the people you're trying to help are afraid and, in some cases, brainwashed?

That means we can't overlook social issues—such as orphanages, drug addition, runaways, domestic abuse, family court—because all may be factors in trafficking. There are myriad ways people are vulnerable in our society. Once you're vulnerable you are more susceptible to being victimized.

"Every time there is a willingness to have a conversation, that's progress."

You've done the research. Fighting human trafficking must get emotional. Extremely.

How so?

I was thinking about our daughters. Our girls were 13 and 14 at the time, which was the average age of entry into trafficking, and so as a mother the issue became very significant to me, almost personal. I don't think I became more afraid, I became a little crazier. I would repeatedly remind my girls that this kind of thing is real. This horrific crime against humanity could happen to anyone's daughter or son. Between 70% and 80% of women involved in commercial sex work were molested as children. It's about vulnerability. So, how are you made vulnerable? Lack of education, lack of resources, poverty, prior sexual molestation. A recent study found a correlation between youth homelessness and trafficking.

That means we can't overlook social issues—such as orphanages, drug addition, runaways, domestic abuse, family court—because all may be factors in trafficking. There are myriad ways people are vulnerable in our society. Once you're vulnerable you are more susceptible to being victimized.

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antagonistic actors with irrational and unfounded hatred for Israeli people. They are rarely portrayed as people longing for justice but subjected to tyranny. There is much more to the complicated story than what the American media normally communicates.

Palestinian people are, with the exceeding generosity of United States taxpayer funding, systemically disenfranchised and oppressed by policies of the Israeli state. A misguided notion of “chosen-ness” and the errant theology of Euro-American Evangelical Christianity lend support to the Israeli government’s use of violence, intimidation, and the violation of international law to maintain the dominance of the Israeli state. Honest theological exploration and conversation is needed among people of faith—both leaders and followers—rather than the misappropriation of selected scriptural texts that contribute to inhumane behavior and justify evil actions.

The Israeli government imposes a system of injustice similar to the Jim Crow laws in the United States that discriminated against African Americans until the mid-1960s and the Apartheid system of racial discrimination against “Black” and “Colored” people in South Africa that ended in 1994. Many of the young Palestinians endure tensions and angst seen today in many African-American youth who live in fear of violence from law enforcement personnel who are supposed to protect and serve but who often face little or no accountability when they harass, injure or murder innocent people. The message of both young Palestinians and young African Americans is the same: "STOP KILLING US!" Further, the State of Israel, which was created to provide a home for persecuted Jews, is detaining or deporting non-Jewish African refugees and asylum seekers.

Palestinian people have been, and continue to be, forcibly removed from their homeland through systematic land confiscation by Israel. In some cases, Palestinian families lived on this land before the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Palestinians often have no reliable access to clean water or electricity because of the control of these resources by the Israeli government. Their neighborhoods are vulnerable to arbitrary raids and acts of terror by the Israeli police force and vigilante militias formed by Israeli settlers in nearby settlements. Palestinian people live regularly under the threat of state-sanctioned violence.

There are many more examples of the inhumane and ethnocentric oppression of Palestinians. They include the continuing expansion of illegal Jewish settlements, the denial of access to quality education, the destruction of schools arbitrarily determined by the Israeli government to be illegal structures, and the police detainment and interrogation of children without parental consent simply because they are Palestinian.

We owe it to the Palestinian people who live under the oppression of the Israeli state—with support from the United States Government, many North American Evangelicals and members of the Jewish Diaspora—to testify about the abuses they endure. We call for humane and sustainable solutions that enable shalom—peace, harmony and well-being—for all who live in that land and the region. We accompanied “living stones” (Palestinian Christians) while in the land...
The more you learn, the more you say to yourself . . .
What else can I do? Where else can I be involved? How else can I make a difference?

Is there a part of you that gets infuriated?
Absolutely! It infuriates me when people look away and pretend this isn’t real or doesn’t happen. It infuriates me to think about anyone being taken advantage of or exploited. It infuriates me to think about those who believe it is acceptable to victimize. Cowards infuriate me. How brave is it to victimize and exploit people who are already vulnerable? Yes, it kind of incenses me.

How big a problem is it for communities of color?
People of color, as we see each day, are among the most vulnerable in our society. However, we are often the last recognized and protected: They don’t look for brown and black girls. Who’s looking for our kids? Think about the 16 who went missing in the Bronx, New York. Who looked for them? I recently served on a panel with a woman who is serving in Native American communities in which trafficking has occurred for centuries. She highlighted how little concern or discussion is focused on that population. When you think about Minnesota’s large population of Native peoples and what industries exist there—agricultural, fishing, manufacturing, and mining—I’ve heard of young Native ladies being taken by cargo ships.

People of color are at-risk. Are they also part of the solution?
It’s sad. While people of color are often disproportionately at risk, we tend not to be involved in anti-human trafficking work. In many of the places I have served, I am often one of very few people of color in the room. Particularly in a room where REAL decisions are being made.

Thankfully, your position as first lady gives you a public platform.
Being the first lady of a large congregation, which has as its motto “A Place Where People Encounter God,” affords me many opportunities. As a congregation, we focus on having a vibrant relationship with God and living the Word. I am blessed to practice the words of Scripture, such as Micah 6:8 and Hebrews 13:3, on my journey. I believe that God allows us periods of influence and resource—not for ourselves, but to do something for someone else.

Our anti-human trafficking ministry, She’s My Sister, serves at the New Day Drop-in Center on the third Thursday of every month from 9 p.m. to midnight. In three short hours, we welcomed more than 35 women into the center and provided a change of clothes, coffee, hygiene kits, meals, and showers at no cost and without judgment. We just hung out, watched movies on Netflix, and discussed the state of our world. Some ladies even took naps. It is always humbling to spend time at the drop-in. I am encouraged by the courage and resiliency of the ladies I encountered. I left determined to do more and with the reminder, “There, but for the grace of God, go I.”
Lott Carey and its partners are still providing disaster relief and recovery in:

- Puerto Rico, hit by Hurricane Maria.
- Houston, Beaumont, Port Arthur and Vidor, hit by Tropical Storm Harvey.
- Haiti, hit by Hurricane Matthew and earthquake.
- Flint, still struggling with a city-wide water crisis.
- Florida, hit by Hurricane Irma.

Donate online at LottCarey.org.
Send checks to: Lott Carey, 8201 Corporate Drive, Suite 1245, Landover, MD 20785-2230.
Missions Means Work but the Effort Will Bless Someone . . . and You

Rev. Xavier L. Johnson is pastor of Bethel Missionary Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio, and juggles a hectic array of civic and church responsibilities. But his recent two-week mission to Palestine provided new perspectives and outlooks and he agreed to spend a few minutes talking about the experience with Lott Carey Herald Managing Editor Mike Tucker. Johnson, who has also been on missions assignments in Jamaica and India, received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of South Florida. He earned a master’s at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and is currently a doctoral candidate at Virginia Theological Seminary.

Why Palestine?
I’ve always wanted to visit the Holy Land and the more I started to read about what was happening over there, I knew the Disneyland version that emphasized the historic sites was not enough. I wanted the opportunity to fellowship and hang out with the people of the land. When Lott Carey offered the opportunity, I jumped at it.

What did you do while over there?
We visited many of the holy sites, but the real meat of the visit was having conversations with our Palestinian sisters and brothers about what was really going on in the area: the night raids carried out by Israel, and about the times electricity and water would be cut off. It was a moving experience.

You mentioned that when you were leaving Israel, exit interviews with missions members could be called a “challenging experience.”
We were all questioned individually about why we had been there, where we had gone, what we had seen, why we had been there.

Was it intimidating?
Yes, and intentionally so. There is a story that the State of Israel wants to perpetuate about what’s happening; there’s a narrative. Any other contravening narratives are frowned upon—are, in the words of our current president, “fake news.” We were now witnesses to the real narrative of what was happening in Palestine. What we saw, heard, and experienced was, quite frankly, very much akin to South African apartheid and American Jim Crow.

How did the Palestinians react to your 12-member delegation?
They were very welcoming. They said they need witnesses to help tell the story of what is really happening over there. Unfortunately, here in the United States, some of our more conservative evangelical sisters and brothers maintain: “We’ve got to protect Israel. Israel is God’s people. Israel is the Promised Land.” They’re towing the line, but not holding Israel accountable for the way in which the Bible says God’s people are supposed to conduct themselves, particularly toward strangers: with hospitality, love, and compassion.

How has the trip influenced your ministry?
At my church, we have talked about Palestine and what’s happening over there. I’m planning a Bible study on Palestine and my parishioners have expressed interest in wanting to visit and have asked for books. We’ve introduced them to Palestinian-Christian theologians and writers and are talking with them about how the struggle in Palestine for freedom and peace and justice is connected to the African-American struggle in America for justice and peace. That’s been eye-opening for them.

Top left, clockwise: Pastor Johnson, the Dome of the Rock (an Islamic shrine), and a grim sign of the times in the Holy Land.

Photos: Rev. Xavier L. Johnson, M.T.S.
of Jesus and walked side-by-side with wounded and marginalized sisters and brothers. We seek, with them, liberation and reconciliation in their part of the world.

In this 50th year since the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we are reminded of his assertion in Letter from a Birmingham Jail that, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” This principle prompts us to offer this statement on justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.

Palestine and Israel are sacred space generally because all of God’s creation is holy, because of its centrality for the Abrahamic traditions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and because of the people who live there that are hungry, thirsty, strangers, needing clothing, sick and imprisoned.

In this 70th year of the creation of the State of Israel, we are obligated to offer this statement:

We call on our Jewish sisters and brothers:
• To affirm the sacredness of all human life, irrespective of ethnicity or religion, and the transforming practice of hospitality asserted in Hebrew Scripture.
• To reject policies of racial or ethnic segregation by the State of Israel.
• To insist that the State of Israel adhere to United Nations Resolutions 242 and pursue negotiations intended to establish a just and sustainable peace in the Middle East.

We call on the United States government:
• To cease military and financial support to Israel until it discontinues the establishment of settlements in Israeli-occupied territories in violation of international law.
• To pursue adherence to United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338.

We call on Evangelical sisters and brothers:
• To prioritize the Kingdom of God over imperialism.
• To promote building justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.
• To reject theologies that justify oppression and violence in the Holy Land, or anywhere.

We call on African Americans and all Christian people:
• To advocate for justice and peace for all people with their governments.
• To support the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement for freedom, justice and equality.
• To engage in justice tourism and pilgrimages hosted by Palestinian Christians rather than investing in tours that support the oppression of Palestinians.

We call on people of all faiths globally:
• To promote, encourage and support local efforts of peace-building by organizations, such as The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization of more than 600 families that have lost family members to the ongoing conflict. The PCFF has concluded that the process of reconciliation between nations is a prerequisite to achieving a sustainable peace. The organization thus utilizes all resources available for education, to hold public meetings, and to engage the media to spread these ideas.
• Wahat al-Salam/Neve Shalom is Arabic and Hebrew for Oasis of Peace, an intentional community jointly established by Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, that gives practical expressions to its vision of an egalitarian society with pioneering educational and extracurricular activities for the community’s children. The goal: Urge their governments to pursue just peace for all people in the region to ensure equity and opportunity for coming generations to live together in harmony.

—David Emmanuel Goatley, Ph.D., Executive Secretary-Treasurer of Lott Carey; Rev. LaKeeyna Cooper, First Lady, Christian Faith Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC, and Secretary, Lott Carey Board of Directors; Rev. Xavier Johnson, Pastor, Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Dayton, Ohio; Bro. Mel Payne, Lott Carey Board of Directors; and Rev. Dr. James E. Victor, Pastor, Mount Olive Baptist Church, Arlington, Virginia.
nation. We cannot allow these ideologies to control the conversation because they spread the lie that the oppressed are at fault. They misidentify and disparage the purpose of Black Lives Matter, a group organized to address police brutality on black persons. These tactics are not new. Similar propaganda was lodged against the NAACP during the 1960s. They compare white nationalist marchers to those who oppose them. They made the same comparison between the KKK and the Freedom Riders.

What is clear is that President Trump’s rhetoric and policies have exposed ugly realities about our country, including backlash against the election of a black president whose pro-citizen policies from health care to consumer protection are being dismantled. So, we just cannot tell the racists who converged on Charlottesville to return to where they came. They are the same people we encounter every day—judges, police officers, loan officers, landlords, cashiers, managers, bosses, CEOs.

Nonetheless, we know that this world’s political solutions do not change the hearts of mankind. Only God can change what He has created and Satan has distorted. Simply, the Gospel is required. The process, however, is complicated and extensive. To continue this march toward justice, we must imagine the Gospel outside of the confines of the church house and without “pie in the sky” Sunday School lessons. We must implement the teachings of Jesus, who changed the world as a political, social, and economic revolutionary.

The Gospel of Jesus requires us to be informed. We must become fluent in the language of all industries and appreciate the contours of political, economic, social, and technological structures. Read books, go to school, attend meetings, ask questions, listen to contrary viewpoints, and study the Word of God. Our worship and service must be done in spirit and in truth, as John 4:24 commands. This will enable us to demand more from leadership, understand the power and limits of our vote, and elevate people to positions of political, economic, and educational influence who can effectuate change for us.

The Gospel of Jesus requires us to be strategic. Heather Heyer, killed by a white supremacist who drove a car through a crowd of counter-protesters in Charlottesville, understood how to blend strategy and moral outrage. Her last Facebook post read: “If you’re not outraged, you’re not paying attention.” Heather was right. We should express moral outrage for the day-to-day atrocities that grip the powerless. But, this passion must be expressed in thoughtful, organized action. Our moral stance must be supported by a sound strategy. To effectuate real and meaningful change, we must think strategically, create plans of action, marshal people and resources, and execute that plan. Indeed, that’s exactly what Jesus did in executing his plan for the Great Commission. His strategy of public teaching and miracle-working drew believers to hear His Gospel message. Also, He recruited and developed leadership to spread His message worldwide.

The Gospel of Jesus requires us to act in love. “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other,” John 13:34 (NLT) tells us. Christians are bound by a moral and spiritual imperative to display outward expressions of love to even the least deserving. God’s presence and power can be known to mankind only where love abides. Make no mistake. Love does not tolerate evil. Love does not cower to the symbols and expressions of hate. Love does not permit the perpetuation of racist ideology. Just the opposite: Love drives out evil, love stands and sacrifices for justice, and love speaks truth to power.

Sitting in this hotel, I am reminded that the Birmingham campaign for civil rights was a coordinated effort for equality. I encourage everyone to reflect on the work we need to accomplish. Let’s not grow complacent and relegate our political, social, and economic action to an expression of our feelings on a Facebook post or tweet to our friends. To “stay woke” is an exercise far beyond expressing our thoughts on social media, at the dinner table, or at the church meeting. It takes much more work than reading a few tweets and a brief news article to inform your thoughts and create solutions. Be strategic, be involved, be the love of God.

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tion, manipulation, and oppression have been inflicted upon so-called racial minorities on this continent from the time of its earliest European migration. Displacements and massacres of Indigenous Nations, the enslavement and murders of Africans, and the dislocation and internment of Asian Americans are horrific examples of racial injustice enabled by religion, government, and customs established to privilege people of European heritage.

Violence has characterized racial injustice in the United States. Physical, psychological, and sexual violence have been used to terrorize and dehumanize people of color. The conscious or unconscious perception of racial supremacy by people of European heritage is accompanied by the privilege affiliated with this erroneous assumption. Erroneous beliefs of racial supremacy and white privilege are advanced through economic, political, educational, religious, and media systems to project these worldviews as normative. This toxic mixture of wrong beliefs and manipulative power has contributed to increasing occurrences of violence against people of color, particularly African-American males, by law enforcement. These hideous abuses and fatalities, with rare accountability, are repulsive to and destabilizing of civilized society. How can people support institutions that threaten, abuse, and murder them?

The Lott Carey Global Christian Missional Community calls for an immediate end to violence against people of color by law enforcement. Further, Lott Carey calls for accountability from law enforcement, the criminal justice system, U.S. communities, and communities of color.

Concerning Law Enforcement
The privilege of wearing a uniform and carrying a weapon imposes the duty on police officers to use good judgement. Officers who fail to exercise judgment that seeks to defuse potentially volatile circumstances and, instead, react violently toward unarmed citizens of color must be held accountable. Police departments, law enforcement fraternities, governmental oversight structures, and the communities they serve must ensure that the law enforcement personnel who serve them receive appropriate cultural training to counteract pervasive racial prejudices in this country. Further, these entities must make sure that policing personnel receive the skills training necessary to ensure that they can function effectively in high-stress situations. This training will help officers avoid erroneous decision-making that may cause danger and even death to members of the public at large and especially those within the minority community.

Concerning the Criminal Justice System
Data show that people of color are arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced at a much higher rate than white people in the United States. Incarceration disadvantages convicted persons when pursuing employment opportunities; limits civil engagement, such as voting;
destabilizes families; and contributes to financial fragility and poverty. The criminal justice systems must remove the profitability of incarceration, and the United States must provide sufficient financial resources to invest in quality education, job creation, and community viability that will benefit the whole of society rather than enriching a few through criminalizing people of color.

Concerning the Impact of Racial Injustice

Throughout the history of the United States, racial injustice, blatant or subtle, has helped to create environments in communities of color where crime, drugs and violence flourish. Guns are not manufactured in communities of color. Drugs are not grown in communities of color. Communities of color do not redirect economic development and community investment funds away from their neighborhoods. Corporate and government entities collude to limit investment in schools, neighborhoods, and public amenities which leave vacuums that become filled with destructive activities and enterprises.

Fiscal and governmental leaders must fairly restructure their approaches to investing in communities that are most vulnerable. These investments will create income; generate wealth; and contribute to safe, stable, and strong communities, cities, counties, and commonwealths.

Concerning Communities of Color

Communities of color, though traumatized by centuries of racial injustice and various forms of violence used to oppress them, cannot use bigotry and inequity as excuses for failing to create strength among themselves. They must organize to promote engaged citizenship, community strength, societal uplift, and neighborhood vitality. They must exercise good judgment in spending their money with businesses that will reinvest in their interests. They must cast their votes for people who will be accountable for responsible governance in relationship to their needs. They must teach young men how to defuse rather than incite potentially volatile situations when engaged by a police officer with a badge and a weapon who is clothed with government authority. An ill-treated citizen cannot win a confrontation with law enforcement in the moment. We must train young people to use discernment, discretion, discipline, and documentation so that they can live long enough to win in court or through arbitration. Racial injustice is unfair and injurious, but people of color have survived and thrived despite slavery, segregation, and oppression. They can, and they must do so in the 21st century.

The Lott Carey Global Christian Missional Community is committed to making peace and ensuring justice. We oppose violence based upon race, gender, religion, nationality, and vulnerability. We support life—nurturing, flourishing, thriving, and affirming life. We are committed to life because we are committed disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified but raised to life eternal. We work for and long for the day when all people will know the love, hope, and joy that is offered from God and in the power of the Holy Spirit. We call upon people of faith and people for life to join us in this journey to end violence and ensure the well-being of all the human family.

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Roofing project in Puerto Rico gets the attention of Luis Orellana of Greater Starlight Missionary Baptist Church, Covington, Louisiana.