



*The Baptist Union
of Sweden*





The Baptist Union of Sweden

The Baptist Union of Sweden (BUS) has around 17,500 members in 214 local churches. The main focus for BUS is to support its member churches and to co-ordinate national and international mission. BUS has formed a vision, as a guideline for its work; *“The vision for the Baptist Union of Sweden is to search for the will of God in our lives and with the help of the Holy Spirit depart from the forces that exploit and tear human beings down and destroy the earth, and live so everybody will find a personal relation with God, through Jesus Christ.”*

The BUS is the oldest Swedish denomination after the Lutheran Church and is active in ecumenical bodies such as the Chris-

tian Council of Sweden and the Swedish Mission Council.

Faith, freedom and fellowship has been its core values since the beginning, in 1848.

A Brief History

The first Baptist church in Sweden was founded on the west coast on 21 September 1848. After the baptism in the sea

they gathered to celebrate the Lord’s Supper and formed a congregation. Their leader was a sailor, F O Nilsson, who had been baptized by Oncken in Hamburg the previous year. As no other religions apart from the Lutheran State Church were permitted at this time, Nilsson and others were severely persecuted. Many were arrested and Nilsson was



“The Baptists” was painted by Gustaf Cederström in 1886

1848

1850

1852

1857

THE BUS HISTORY

The first believers’ baptism in Sweden occurs on September 21. A congregation is founded with F O Nilsson as its leader.

Nilsson is banned from the country because of his “heretical views”.

The former Lutheran priest Anders Wiberg becomes a Baptist and writes the first book on believers baptism in Swedish.

The first General Conference of Swedish Baptists is held in Stockholm.



Karin Wiborn (BUS), Göran Zettergren (Mission Covenant Church) and Øystein Olsen (Methodist Church) at the ecumenical gathering in Göteborg 2008.

banished from Sweden in 1850. In 1853 he led a group of immigrants to America.

By 1860, over 120 local churches had been established. Despite persecution and legal restrictions, Baptist views spread across the country. In Stockholm in 1852, a former Lutheran clergyman, Anders Wiberg, wrote the book *“Who is to be baptized and what is baptism?”*, being the first study in Swedish to advocate believer’s baptism. In 1857, Anders Wiberg summoned the first General Conference of Swedish Baptists. After a second trip to America he returned in 1866 with support for starting a seminary.

By the end of the century more than 500 local churches had been founded.

Ecumenical Talks

Ecumenical relations have grown through the 20th Century with the Swedish Mission Covenant Church (MCCS) and the Methodist Church of Sweden. The three denominations now co-operate in theological education (Stockholm School of Theology). Our three independent youth work organisations have formed a federation (equmenia). The BUS and MCCS also share a newspaper (Sändaren). In 2009, the general gatherings of our three churches/unions took one step further in the ecumenical process,

when a letter of intent was signed by all three conferences to work for one united denomination, with a possible merger in 2011 or 2012.

Baptist Movements in Sweden

The BUS has seen a number of splits over the years. The first occurred in 1872 and gave rise to the Free Baptist Fellowship. From 1913 what was known as the New Movement grew out of BUS to become the Pentecostal Church. In the 1930’s, the Örebro Mission (now called InterAct/ Evangeliska Frikyrkan), left the BUS. Today, BUS and InterAct have several joint ventures in mission and publishing.

1866

Betelseminariet is inaugurated with K O Broady as the first principal.

1868

The weekly magazine Veckoposten is started.

1872

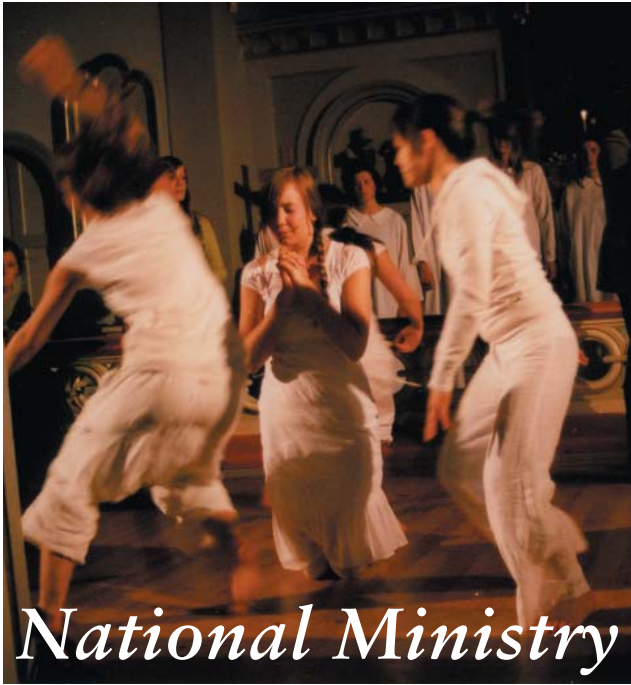
The pastor H Åkesson is expelled which is the beginning of the Free-Baptist Association.

1881

Erik Lund goes to Spain as the Baptist Union’s first missionary.

1891

The Örebro Mission Society is founded. Carl Vingren becomes the first missionary to China.



Dance students from Bethel Scool preform in a worship service picturing the first baptism in Sweden in 1848.

Our national ministry focuses on church development, education, church planting and dialogue (Brommadiologen). The BUS continues to search for new ways to spread the Gospel in Sweden in the 21st Century, facing big challenges in both church life and society.

For church development, our main tool is NCD, Natural Church Development. The most important factors are the

NCD Survey, measuring the "health" of the church in eight different areas, followed by a coach-led process towards improvement and growth. Approximately 60 of our 214 congregations have made use of NCD.

Since 1993, theological education is given at the ecumenical *Stockholm School of Theology*. The school also has an advanced education in Human Rights. BUS has two folk

high-schools, Bethel and Sjövik, offering courses in theology, music, leadership, arts, and more.

At present, about 10 projects in church planting and transformation are running with support from the BUS.

Since the 1990's, the Baptist Union of Sweden has also used another way of working to find new ways to communicate the Gospel; through dialogue with spiritual seekers and the twelve step movement in *Brommadiologen*.

Dialogue

– A way of reaching out in modern society

The word "dialogue" (dialogon) means "through conversation". This indicates learning in a mutual way. When dialogue is used as a method, insights can not be anticipated, since no one can know the outcome of a free conversation. In a dialogue session, we enter with openness; I will learn something new; my truths may be revised or completed.

Brommadiologen (the Bromma dialogue) was started by theologian Harry Månus in 1992. He had observed a longing for spi-

1892

E V Sjöblom becomes the first missionary to Congo.

1905

The Swedish Baptist Union is a founding member of the BWA in London. The Swedish Baptist Youth Federation begins its work.

1913

The second European Congress is held in Stockholm. The Filadelfia church in Stockholm is excluded which marks the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement.

1914

The Swedish Baptist Women's Federation is founded.



A dialouge group in Norrtälje Baptist Church har brought new life to the congregation.

rituality in society, which was met by New Age, while the churches failed to embrace this movement. Månsus resigned from his teaching and went on his own journey of discovering and connecting to the new forms of spirituality, particularly connected with the Recovery concept/twelve step movement. Brommadiologen was his response to the need for dialogue between christian and al-

ternative spirituality, which he promoted until his retirement in 2006.

Brommadiologen has now become known as a vital instrument for building bridges across groups of alternative spirituality and the churches. The ministry has included conferences, book production and courses. It has also resulted in "dialogue groups" in baptist congregations all over the country, and

the *Brobygge* programme, educating "bridge builders" between christian and alternative spirituality, with students from varying backgrounds.

Relation with the twelve step movement has also been an integrated part of Brommadiologen, with special serenity worship as an outcome, which focus on recovering alcoholics and other "anonymous" groups.

1932

The first woman is elected to the Mission Board of the Union.

1937

The Örebro Mission Society leaves the Baptist Union.

1958

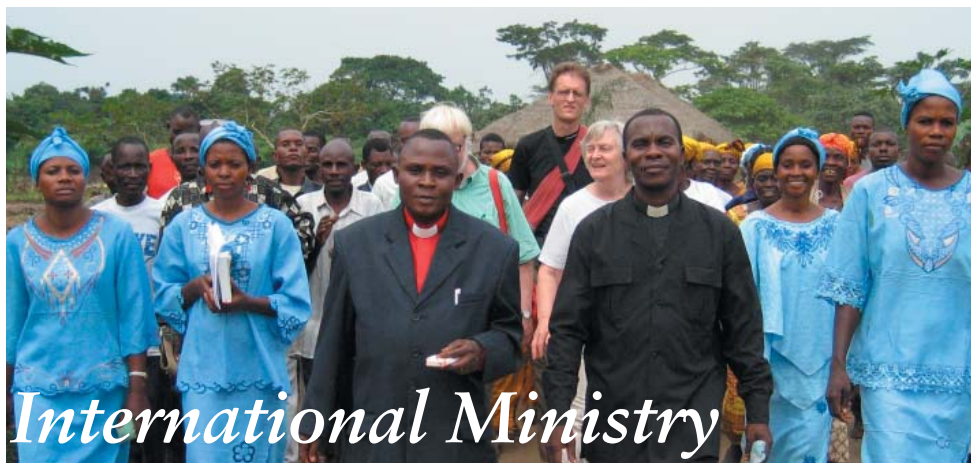
The first female pastors U-C Axelsson and Ulla Bardh are ordained.

1968

The Baptist Church in Farsta introduces open membership.

1969

The first merger between a Baptist Congregation and a Covenant Church occurs in Höör.



Paul Mabuna (pastor to the left) is general secretary of BUS' sister church in DR Congo.

International Ministry

The aim of BUS international mission is to present and express the gospel according to the word of Jesus, in close co-operation with our local partners. When Jesus Christ has been implemented in the life of an ethnic group we believe that evangelism should be carried out by indigenous workers. We want to partner this work as a sister church. We also think that we have a lot to learn from other cultures and other peoples ways of interpreting Christian faith in word and deed.

The focus for our International work is summarized in the following sentence: *“Together – with*

the Whole Gospel for the Whole Human Being to All People and the Whole Earth”. It’s about mutual partnership for the liberation of man and creation, spiritual, socially and physically through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

At present, the Baptist Union of Sweden has co-operation in mission in Thailand, DR Congo, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Japan, Burma, Belarus and Lithuania. Baptists in Thailand are sending Youth volunteers to Sweden. The believers in Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan show the baptists in Sweden the importance of following Jesus even in oppression. Together with refugees from

Burma we fight for freedom and Human rights in Burma. At the same time these refugees enrich our Swedish churches. We have a fruitful exchange of ideas and visits between our Union and the Baptists in Japan and Lithuania. Many local churches in Sweden are involved in giving support to social work in Belarus and a special project is launched to inform the Swedes about the lack of Human Rights in order to contribute to a change in Belarus. In co-operation with the European Baptist Federation the Baptist Union of Sweden is involved in the work against Human Trafficking and in the promotion of religious freedom.

1975

The BWA Congress is held in Stockholm.

1984

Birgit Karlsson becomes the first woman to hold the position as General Secretary of a denomination in Sweden.

1992

Brommadiologen (the Bromma Dialogue) is founded by theologian Harry Månsus

1992

The Christian Council of Sweden is founded with Birgit Karlsson as its president.



Children at a hostel in northern Thailand during a visit from the Swedish Baptist Women's Federation.

The Swedish Baptist Women's Federation

SBKF was formed in 1914 and has approximately 1800 members in 75 local groups. SBKF offers meeting places for women

on a local, regional and national level. SBKF's international ministries include child sponsorship programs and social, educational and spiritual development programs for

women, with Thailand as the main focus area. In Sweden, SBKF arranges summer camps for single mothers and their children, and actively works to stop human trafficking.



The youth federation equemenia was formed in 2008 in Göteborg.

Youth Work - equemenia

equemenia is a federation between the Methodist Youth, Swedish Baptist Youth Federation and Mission Covenant Youth. Equemenia supports local work among children and youth in about 500 congregations. equemenias works to help local youth workers spread the good news about Jesus Christ in both teaching and actions.

1992

Sändaren, a joint weekly magazine, is created by the Baptist Union and Mission Covenant Church

1993

Stockholm School of Theology is founded by the Baptist Union and the Mission Covenant Church

2008

The Baptist, Mission Covenant and Methodist Youth federations start the ecumenical federation equemenia.

2009

The ecumenical process between the BUS, Mission Covenant Church and Methodist Church deepens.



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