

Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist

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Empower will be different this year

ROCHESTER, Minn.

— Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, Empower will have a different look and feel this year, but what will be the same is the presence of nationally known speakers challenging and inspiring churches and their members to be all that they can be.

“Living from the Overflow: Serving Out of Your Intimacy With God” is the theme of the Mar. 12-13 event which will be at the Great Wolf Lodge in Wisconsin Dells, Wis. The first session begins at 1 p.m. Friday and the last session ends at 11 a.m. Saturday. The event is described as “an inspirational weekend of worship and training for specific ministries for Christ followers of all ages.”

Plenary session speakers for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist



Convention event will be Richard Blackaby and Johnny Hunt.

Blackaby is president of Blackaby Ministries International. He served as senior pastor at Friendship Baptist Church in Winnipeg, Canada, and then as the president of the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary for 13 years. He continues to serve as the seminary’s chancellor.

Hunt is senior vice president of evangelism and leadership for the North American Mission Board. He served 33 years as senior pastor of First Baptist

Church of Woodstock, Ga., and was president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2008.

As of the end of February only a few spaces remained for the event. Attendees must register for the event through the MWBC website and also make their own lodging reservations with Great Wolf Lodge, (800) 559-9653, or some other area hotel. Empower attendees are not required to stay overnight at Great Wolf to attend the meeting but MWBC has a special rate on rooms while they last.

“Just as MWBC churches have had to find creative solutions to meet for worship, the MWBC has had to be creative in hosting Empower this year,” said Clint Calvert, MWBC church leadership catalyst. “Thank you for your flexibility in meeting with us during these unusual circumstances.”

differences this year:

- Because of the resort’s rules, there will be social distancing and masks required of all guests age 5 and up.

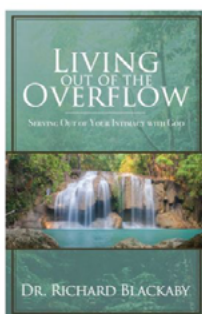
- There will be no childcare, but families staying at Great Wolf Lodge are encouraged to come early and stay late to enjoy the water park and other amenities.

- There will be no worship music time during the sessions.

- Everyone will be on their own for meals at Great Wolf or nearby restaurants.

- COVID regulations will limit meeting room occupancy, but a rotation and simulcast schedule will make it possible to accommodate the largest number of people possible.

“Attendees will be assigned rooms in a rotation so that each attendee will be able to be in the Black Wolf Room for one of the



Free Books at EMPOWER

Choose one per participant, while supplies last

Here are some of the

See **EMPOWER** page 5

Ten Percent: A Call to Biblical Stewardship

By Ronnie Floyd

Americans gave 3.02 percent of their income to the church in 1968. By 2017, it had declined to 2.13 percent. If this trend is not reversed, by 2050 it is projected to decline to 1.66 percent.

This money does not belong to people to keep in their pockets, because all money belongs to God. We are called to honor God with at least the first ten percent of all

God has entrusted to us in life. This practice is to be ongoing weekly, not weakly.

The greatest financial security for all Christ-followers is to practice God's financial plan by following a biblical pattern to carry out personal stewardship.

Your personal financial posture and your church's financial posture does not improve by keeping money and hoarding what you may think is yours. Conversely, your personal financial security and your church's financial security is more certain when you follow God's financial plan found in the Bible.

Resources for your church

That is why I have written "Ten Percent: A Call to Biblical Stewardship," a Bi-

ble-based, theologically sound stewardship emphasis which includes two resources every church can use regardless of size or location:

- A six-week sermon series
- A six-week curriculum for Sunday School or small groups

The sermons and lessons complement each other. For example, while the pastor preaches in the worship service that "God Is the

Owner of Everything," each of your small groups, Bible study classes and Sunday school classes teach the same.

Your team of laypersons or staff can easily transfer these principles so they can be simultaneously taught to all of your students, children, and preschoolers. If you do not teach them, no one will. Everyone, at all stages of life, needs to be called to biblical stewardship.

Six biblical principles

The six principles I am encouraging you to teach your people are proven. They are biblical, strategic and practical.

1. God Is the Owner of Everything
2. We Own Absolutely Nothing
3. Honor God with at Least the First Ten Percent



Floyd



4. Bring the Full Ten Percent to the Church
5. Practice Over and Above Giving
6. Focus on the Great Commission Always

These six principles are steps to giving your church members a biblical way to look at their entire lives, including the finances that God alone has entrusted to them. Each church can and should do the same.

Digital church kit available for free

There is no cost to you or your church for this resource. Everything is downloadable at:

[SBC.net/stewardship](https://www.sbc.net/stewardship).

To enable congregations and pastors to better use this resource in the local church, we have created a digital church kit. This kit includes:

- A PDF copy of the book which you can distribute to all in your church
- Promotional graphics for use in your church

- Bulletin inserts for use in your church
- PowerPoint slides for your sermon series
- Social media graphics to use

You can request this free digital church kit [here](https://www.sbc.net/stewardship).

Why six weeks?

You may question why you would focus six weeks on a series like this. I believe we need to stop making excuses for not teaching stewardship because of fear or worry about what someone thinks. Why would you not teach about this subject? Given the infrequency of church attendance today, your best church members may be in church only two or three weeks over a six-week period of time.

This is how you can help people and your church

Pastor and church leader, let's emphasize the biblical principles of stewardship, standing upon the Bible's

authority in the name of Jesus, teaching them to give to your church in the power of the Holy Spirit. Laypersons and church leaders must echo these Scriptural teachings and loudly proclaim a hearty "Amen!" with the way they give of the resources that God alone has entrusted to them.

If a pastor and his church leaders do not teach principles of stewardship to the entire church in an ongoing manner, then we are not helping people and families, nor discipling them to be all God wants them to be in their lives. This needs to change and change now.

"Ten Percent: A Call to Biblical Stewardship" is provided to help you personally and your church collectively. Get this resource now and begin utilizing it to encourage your church to live biblically with the financial resources given to them by God.

Ten percent? Biblical Finance 101

Have you noticed that you almost never hear words like “stewardship” or “tithing” in the church today? As a result, fewer and fewer people tithe to their local church.

Ronnie Floyd, in his new book, “Ten Percent: A Call to Biblical Stewardship,” cites research that the



Perspectives

Leo Endel

giving percentage of Americans is down to an all-time low of 2.13%. Americans gave more in the Great Depression, 3.2%, than we do today. Floyd extrapolates the trend to estimate giving of 1.66% by

2050. Will your church survive with that kind of giving?

See more about Ronnie Floyd’s “Ten Percent” book on [page 2](#).

I just text messaged an accountant friend who does hundreds of clergy tax returns (all different denominations) and asked him to estimate the percentage of pastors who give a

tithe to their church. His estimate was 22 percent. I don’t even know what to say in response to this estimate.

As a boy, my parents taught me to tithe. Back then I occasionally received a quarter for an allowance. Generally, I took a nickel of that quarter to church the following Sunday and put it in the Sunday School envelope (not sure anyone does this anymore). I remember the pride of participating in the funding of our local church and helping the gospel touch the nations of the world. When I got older, the habit was ingrained, and I celebrated the privilege of giving. Honestly, my obedience came because my parents taught me the biblical view of money very early in my life. They taught me

that all my money came from the Lord!

It has been years since I taught my last stewardship conference based on the old Baptist Sunday School Board’s book, “Partners with God.” My modified outline of those materials was entitled: “Partners with God: Bible Truths about Giving.” Here’s a general overview of what the Bible tells us about money. First, money is not really ours.

1. Money Understood Properly

- a) God owns it all (Deut. 10:14, Ps. 24:11)
- b) We are God’s stewards or partners (Deut. 8:18)
- c) The ability to give is a gift of God (1 Chr. 29:14)
- d) We can’t love God

and money (Matt. 6:24)

2. Money Acquired Honestly

- a) Work is our God-given means to earn money (Gen. 2:2; Eccl. 2:24-25, 2 Thess. 3:10)
- b) Don’t chase fantasies (Prov. 12:11; 1 Tim. 6:9-10)
- c) Don’t steal or cheat others (Prov. 13:11, Ex. 20:15)

3. Money Managed Effectively

- a) Don’t look for things to satisfy your soul (Eccl. 5:10-20)
- b) Don’t selfishly consume your resources on yourself (Amos 6:4-7, Jas. 2:16)
- b) Plan your expenditures (building a tower, Luke 14:28-f)

See **FINANCE** page 8

The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist:

- The state paper and official publication of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

- A Christian newsjournal with a focus on Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptists – their interests, churches, and partners.

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Comfort for those who grieve

Most of us first experience grief as a child with the death of a pet who shared our childhood. Many dogs, cats and birds have been buried beneath carefully turned soil moistened with childhood tears.

Grief eventually comes more forcefully with the death of a parent, a brother, sister, or friend. If we live long enough, it will come

to each of us when we part with those we love most.



Reflections

Bill Tinsley

David, who wrote the Psalms, was famous for his grief over the death of his son Absalom. Even though Absalom led a rebellion against him

seeking to unseat him from the throne of Israel, when David heard that Absalom was dead, he was inconsolable. He wept and cried, “O my son Absalom, my

son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Samuel 18:33). On another occasion, when David grieved over the death of another child, he said, “I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Sam. 12:23).

Confidence in Heaven and the resurrection does not eliminate grief, but it takes away the sting. That is why the Apostle Paul writes, “But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immor-

tal, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’” (1 Cor. 15:54).

My father died when I was 29, my mother when I was 64. I preached my grandfather’s funeral, as well as the funerals of numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and friends. In January my family buried my mother’s sister in Texas. Two weeks later our daughter and

See **GRIEF** page 7

Unusual circumstances demand flexibility at this year's Empower

Empower will be held Mar. 12-13 at Great Wolf Lodge in Wisconsin Dells, Wis. The event will start at 1 p.m. Friday and conclude by 11 a.m. Saturday.

Plenary sessions are planned for 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Friday and 9 a.m. on Saturday. Plenary session speakers are Dr. Richard Blackaby and Pastor Johnny Hunt.

Breakout sessions are planned for 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. Friday. Empower attendees are not required to stay overnight at Great Wolf to attend the meeting. There is no childcare provided. Meals are on your own

at Great Wolf or at the many nearby restaurants.



Leadership
Clint Calvert

Empower this year will be different due to social distancing guidelines due to COVID-19 facility restrictions. Here are some important notes for people to remember this year.

We will be wearing masks.

All guests, age 5 and older, are required to wear a face covering that fully covers their nose and mouth, and secures under their chin, while visiting the resort. Guests are required to wear a face covering in all public areas of the resort

except while dining, visiting outdoor areas where a physical distance of six feet is maintainable, or when actively enjoying the water park attractions.

Wearing a face covering is part of the resort rules and listed in the terms and conditions guests agree to when visiting a Great Wolf Lodge. If a guest doesn't have a face covering, the resort will provide one. If a guest repeatedly refuses to comply with resort rules that have a direct impact on the health and safety of resort guests and staff, the guest may be asked to stay confined in their room or leave the resort.

We will be socially distancing.

Due to social distancing guidelines

determined by Great Wolf Lodge there are strict limits on the number of people who can be present in a meeting room at any one time. In order to accommodate the largest number of people possible, the MWBC is implementing a rotation and simulcast schedule for Empower.

The plenary sessions at 1 p.m. Friday, 7 p.m. Friday, and 9 a.m. Saturday will be held in the Black Wolf Room. Attendees will be assigned rooms in a rotation so that each attendee will be able to be in the Black Wolf Room for one of the three plenary sessions. During the event, attendees will visit other meeting rooms to view a simulcast of the plenary sessions in the Red Wolf Room, White Wolf Room and Gray Wolf Room.

During the breakout sessions at 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. Friday, attendees will go to the rooms designated to hear Rick Fisher, Leo Endel, Na Herr, or the MWBC Kid Ministry Team. Books for each breakout will be made freely available to breakout attendees.

Just as MWBC churches have had to find creative solutions to meet for worship, the MWBC has had to be creative in hosting Empower this year. Thank you for your flexibility in meeting with us during these unusual circumstances. Please contact Clint Calvert at calvert@mwbc.org for more information about Empower.

Clint Calvert is church leadership catalyst for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

You can be certain of this: things change

It has been said that the only thing one can be certain of is that things change.

I have to admit that 2020 was wrought with many situations that demand change. Often the

catalyst to change can be difficult and seemingly insurmountable. Yet God always opens a door to see his work done. COVID-19, civil unrest and the effects of

these whether borne of reality or fear require us to adjust the way we live, the way we interact and the way we go about what used to be ordinary.



Disaster Relief
Ben Seamans

Disaster relief is not immune. We have had to adapt what we do and how we do it. As with all our states in Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDRL), we are working diligently on producing more of our trainings online. We look

to have some of these up and running by April of this year. With a couple of test churches to host, we will have a limited live training simultaneously livestreamed through Zoom for those who wish to train from home. Afterwards, these will be edited and integrated into our web page. As we prepare for these changes, please pray for those who assist in the development and beta versions of this effort. Look for the dates, locations and registration information on the MWBC website calendar soon.

See **CHANGE** page 7

Pastor Care Line: 1-844-PASTOR1

A free, confidential, dedicated
help line for pastors.

Trained, professional counselors are
available every day 7 am to 9 pm

Some financial assistance
is available through a grant
from NAMB and gifts from
the State Missions Offering
of the MWBC

email endel@mwbc.org
for more info on financial assistance

The MWBC in partnership
with NAMB and Focus on the Family

Commitment vs. authenticity

Authenticity seemed to rule the day as the driving “critical mechanism” within the church planting world for some time as it attempted to create life-giving community.

Authenticity spread its blanket over a wide swath of varying tribes, denominations, and networks. I would rarely hear of a church’s vision for community without hearing about authenticity.

In one sense, this is good, because I think we recognize as Christians that we do community differently from

the world and a big portion of that difference is to live open and honest lives with each other.

Authenticity has some major hurdles that must be understood, one of which is the reality that authenticity

is not the goal nor is it the “critical mechanism” in developing life-giving community. Commitment is.

Authenticity without an understanding, call to and primary focus on biblical covenantal type commitment among God’s very varied people tends to lead to more problems than it solves.



Church Planting

Joshua Whetstine

Commitment, no matter how long it takes, will lead to appropriate degrees of authenticity, but authenticity without commitment often stunts and fractures community. Commitment is the atmosphere of authenticity. We see this in our relationship with God, in marriage and with our children.

God was committed to His creation as he progressively

revealed Himself to it and in it. From Genesis to Revelation, God’s commitment is present, foundational, and unchanging, but we understand much more about God by Revelation than was understood in Exodus. Why? Because commitment, not authenticity, is the foundation of the life-giving community we all hope to develop in our churches.

Commitment cannot

be faked. The people around us know exactly what we want them to know, and so they speak and relate to and about you based only on what you are willing to share.

Commitment, or lack thereof, is immediately known to all. You cannot fake commitment.

Joshua Whetstine is church planting field director for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

EMPOWER

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three plenary sessions,” Calvert said. Those not in the main room will be able to view a simulcast of the plenary sessions in the Red Wolf Room, White Wolf Room, or Gray Wolf Room.

Breakout sessions will be at 3 and 4 p.m. on Friday. Topics include “Becoming A House of Prayer” (Rick Fisher, vice president of Blackaby Ministries International); “Where Do We Go from Here” (Leo Endel, MWBC executive director); “Becoming a Mission-

ary” (Na Herr, MWBC intercultural catalyst); “Unshakeable Kids Ministry” (MWBC Kids Ministry Team); and “Destination DIG” (2021 VBS Preview). Free resources will be provided during the breakout sessions.

Back to the beginning

Pray for Your MWBC Missionaries

ANNIE ARMSTRONG
EASTER OFFERING
FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

Danny D'Acquisto
Elie Hasbani
Maxo Maceno
Kevin Binkley
Matt Miller
Issa Safadi
Tom Stark
Grayson Gilbert
Kurt Owens
Joseph Zayas
Don Bennett
Viphone Thammarak
Blake Canterbury
Mike Schumann
Nathan Mooneyham
Jahu Lee
Josiah Van Tah

Jake Tonak
Victor Ordonez
Patrick Porras
Jesse Beernink
Peter Ko
Jairo Martinez
Jose Baker
Ugorji Onwuka
Aaron Ramquist
Aaron Downs
Jacob Hatfield
Enoc Beaza
Marshal Segal
Helcio Duarte
Mouafu Mouanoutoua
Steve Phillips
Nhia Ying Vang

Brett Toney
Tom Boyer
Jacob Christy
Brian Kite
Richard Johnson
Dan Nichols
Christopher Asmus
Samuel Asuma
Bryan Blazosky
Levi Secord
Kevin Chen
Ephraim Ankiabom

Sam Choi
Christian Malone
Scot Mendenhall
Philip Nache
Paul Reichman
Johnny Russell
Greg Mott
Jonathon Woodyard
Joshua Whetstine
Mark Millman
Gerardo Rodriguez
Jonathan Parnell

*Your Prayers Have
Eternal Impact*

Good news from the associations

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

Pastor Jesse Beernink of Resonate church in Janesville says that since the church has re-opened following the COVID-19 restrictions, several new families have started attending. Also, his ministry as a fire department chaplain has opened numerous doors for ministry.

Pastor Rob Warren reports Doxa Church in Madison was able to

help dozens of families and purchase gifts for 140 children during the Christmas season, thanks to the generosity of the church family and partnerships with the Lincoln, Badger Rock and Theresa Terrace Neighborhood Centers.

A SEND Network gathering for church planters and those interested in church planting will be held 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mar. 17, at Doxa

Church in Madison. Lunch will be provided and there is no cost to attend, but registration is required at <https://live.sendnetwork-gatherings.com>.

NORTHWOODS

Grace Connection in Wadena has been blessed by starting a Sunday evening outreach Bible study in their community.

Cross Pointe Church in Cambridge had 300

people in church recently and 15 people in their membership class, nine of whom are wanting to join the church.

TWIN CITIES

Pastor Tom Boyer of Emmaus Church in White Bear Lake reports the church, planted in June 2020, has been able to meet in person each Sunday despite the pandemic. "We have had landlords close

their doors last minute, but God has always provided a place for worship," he said, adding that although a few have contracted COVID-19, "there has been zero transmission during church events."

On Jan. 28, Vertical Church in St. Paul closed on the purchase of a building at 55 Victoria St. "And just like that, we have a church home!" Pastor Chris Asmus wrote.

EMPOWER

Living from the Overflow

March 12 & 13

Great Wolf Lodge Wisconsin Dells, WI

Register at mwbc.org



Richard Blackaby



Johnny Hunt



Rick Fisher



Leo Endel



Na Herr

GRIEF

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grandchildren buried our son-in-law's mother in Georgia. We must all face the loss of loved ones.

A few years ago, I visited a cemetery in old Boston where the tombstones date back to some of the earliest residents of the Colonies. I discovered an interesting pattern. Those grave makers erected before 1730 bore skulls and cross bones. They were the picture of death and despair. The markers erected after 1740 bore the images of angels and cherubim and were often inscribed with verses about heaven.

The only event that could have made such a difference in the Boston markers is the Great Awakening that swept the Colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. Benjamin Franklin wrote of the Awakening that there was a "wonderful . . . change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants . . . so that one could not walk thro' the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of

every street."

Grief as a believer in Jesus Christ is deep and real, but it is not a grief without hope. Even Jesus grieved when he stood outside the tomb of his friend Lazarus. Although

he knew he would call Lazarus from the grave and raise him from the dead, the Bible says "Jesus wept." When Jesus wept, he demonstrated to us that God not only knows our grief,

he feels it. We do not grieve alone or in isolation nor do we grieve without hope.

Bill Tinsley is a former executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Conven-

tion. Appearing in various local newspapers around the country, his column "reflects" on current events and life experiences from a faith perspective.

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CHANGE

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Lastly, we have begun the huge task of updating our database for our volunteers and leaders. Many of our emails and contact information are invalid and need to be updated; several leadership positions need to be filled. Phone calls and emails will begin soon. If your information has

changed in the past seven years, please email the changes to us at dr@mwbc.org. Until then, blessings as we serve together through these challenging times.

Ben Seamans is co-director of disaster relief for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

Back to the beginning

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MWBC events are in bold print.

To have your events included, email them to davidwilliams@compuserve.com.

MARCH

7-14 Week of Prayer and Mission Study for North American Missions/Annie Armstrong Easter Offering

12-13 Empower Conference, Great Wolf Lodge, Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

APRIL

2 Good Friday – **MWBC Office Closed**

16-17 MWBC Executive Board Meeting, Rochester, Minn.

30 MWBC Lottie Moon Offering Cutoff

MAY

21 New Pastor Orientation, Rochester, Minn.

31 Memorial Day Observed – **MWBC Office Closed**

JUNE

13-16 Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tenn.

Hands of Hope - TBD

30 MWBC Annie Armstrong Offering Cutoff

JULY

5 Independence Day Holiday Observance – **MWBC Office Closed**

9-23 SEA Harvest Mission Trip

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

1-30 Season of Prayer for State Missions

6 Labor Day – **MWBC Office Closed**

17-18 MWBC Executive Board, Rochester, Minn.

OCTOBER

15-17 Called Out Youth Conference, Baraboo Wis.

21 Annual Church Planter Forum – TBD

22 Pastors Conference, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

22-23 MWBC Annual Meeting, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

NOVEMBER

25/26 Thanksgiving Holiday – **MWBC Office Closed**

28-12/4 Week of Prayer and Mission Study for International Missions/Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

DECEMBER

24-1/1 Christmas/New Year's Holiday - **MWBC Office Closed**



FREEWILL

Do you have an up-to-date will?

Everyone needs a will!

Wills are the best way to take care of your family. Many people use their will to make their last tithe to their church.

you can get your will for FREE

provided as a **FREE GIFT** by the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Foundation visit the website at FreeWill.com/mwbc

M-W Baptists partner with Farmers to Families to get food to people who need it

MILWAUKEE – Five Lakeland Baptist Association churches distributed thousands of food boxes to people in their communities during February.

Joining in the effort were Layton Avenue Baptist Church in Greenfield, Wis., and Brown Deer (Wis.) Baptist Church on Feb. 13, and three Milwaukee churches on Feb. 27: Mt. Horeb Baptist Church, Jericho Church Without Walls, and Northwest Baptist Church. Brown Deer is planning to distribute another thousand boxes in late March. LBA also hosted a drive-through prayer station and free protective facemask giveaway on Mar. 6 at the Midtown Shopping Center in Milwaukee.

The food giveaway was in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers to Families program that is designed to get food directly into the hands of people who, because of COVID-19 and other reasons, are



Volunteers at Mount Horeb Baptist Church in Milwaukee load a car with food boxes

facing food insecurity, defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Other Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention churches have also participated in the program. City on a Hill in Madison, Wis., gave away a thousand boxes on Feb. 3 and again on Feb. 20, putting the boxes into hundreds of cars as they drove through. Last October, with just two days' notice, Emmanuel Baptist in

Rochester, Minn., accepted a shipment and distributed 1,200 boxes of food and 1,200 gallons of milk in six hours.

The partnership is spreading this spring with as many as two dozen MWBC churches planning to participate in March or April.

The 30 pound food boxes contain meat, dairy, and produce.

They are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis, one box per family, with no income requirements.

What is 'Farmers to Families'?

The following is excerpted from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website, <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food-to-usda/farmers-to-families-food-box>.

As part of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program announced on April 17, USDA is exercising authority under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to purchase and distribute agricultural products to those in need.

Through this program, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is partnering with national, regional and local distributors, whose workforces have been significantly impacted by the closure of restaurants, hotels and other food service businesses, to purchase up to \$6 billion in fresh produce, dairy and meat products from American producers of all sizes. Distributors package these products into family-sized boxes, then transport them to food banks, community and faith-based organizations, and other non-profits serving Americans in need.

As of Mar. 4, USDA contractors had delivered 142,206,606 boxes of fresh produce, milk, dairy and cooked meats to disadvantaged Americans across the country.

brings thanksgiving to God (2 Cor. 9:11-12)

6. Money Administered Cooperatively

a) Give it wisely through your church so godly people can cooperate together and wisely use your giving to further Christ's Kingdom (storehouse giving, Matt. 3:9-10).
b) We can do more together than we can do separately (Eccl. 4:9-12).

c) Individually, we might be able touch our local community with the Gospel. Together we can impact the world.

Brothers and sisters, find your joy in fueling the Great Commission through your local church by learning the joy of giving.

The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention office has a number of copies of Dr. Ronnie Floyd's new book, *Ten Percent: A Call to Biblical Stewardship*. If you'd like a free copy please email Na Herr, herr@mwbc.org.

Leo Endel is executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

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- c) Manage your money carefully (Matt. 25)
- d) Avoid debt (Prov. 22:7, Ps. 37:21)

4. Money Returned Obediently

- a) Called to give at least a tenth back to the Lord (Lev. 27:30, Matt.

3:8-10)

b) Jesus affirmed the tithe (Matt. 23:23-25)

c) Wouldn't grace give even more than a tithe (2 Cor. 8:1-7). The Macedonians gave out of their poverty, "beyond their ability."

5. Money Shared Generously

- a) Sow generously (2 Cor. 9:6)

b) God rewards giving to the poor (Prov. 19:17)

c) "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed." (Prov. 11:25)

d) "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

e) Our generosity

TCMBA luncheon deals with race relations

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. — As critical race theory became a hot topic among Southern Baptists, the Twin Cities Metro Baptist Association decided to use its January luncheon to deal with the subject.

The monthly luncheons — for Twin Cities pastors and church planters — try to address current topics that are relevant to all. These luncheons are offered in person, socially distanced with box lunches. Pastors and planters also have the option to join via Zoom and still fully participate in the discussion.

In January, as the SBC scrambled to deal with the media's negative portrayal of their six seminary presidents' statement on Critical Race Theory, Chris Reinertson, TCMBA director of missions, felt it was necessary

to quickly address the issue, "not only to better educate our pastors on what systemic racism and CRT are, but also to continue the discussion that has ripped our country apart since the beginning days and especially the wounds Minneapolis is still reeling from," said Jude Reinertson, TCMBA administrative assistant.

Reinertson, who is senior pastor of Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, Minn., set up a panel discussion for the Jan. 21 lunch. Included on the panel were Francis Tabla, pastor of Ebenezer Community Church in Brooklyn Park, Minn., and author of "SCRAP Racism: The Church's Response to Racism," and Dr. Leo Endel, executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention. They each shared their



Chris Reinertson, TCMBA director of missions, facilitates a panel discussion on critical race theory at the association's monthly pastors/planters luncheon in January. The meeting was at Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, Minn.

understanding of what CRT is and what the response of pastors/planters needs to be as they lead their churches.

"Dr. Tabla indicated that he personally has never felt any sort of bias from our association nor convention and feels supported here," Reinertson said. "That has not always been the case for him in other

parts of the country." In addition to the panel discussion, the pastors/planters also had a discussion and prayer time.

The February TCMBA luncheon featured Dr. Scott Jensen, a former Minnesota senator, and currently a family practitioner in Watertown, Minn. He has been very active in the study of COVID-19, the vaccines, and tracking Minnesota's response to the pandemic. He has been interviewed

and featured on some national news programs.

At the luncheon, Dr. Jensen shared his own faith story of coming to Christ and then explained some of the current misinformation that is being shared by the media. A question and answer period followed for pastors and planters to get his opinion on specific struggles their churches are having with the pandemic and how to bring hope and calm in the midst.



Francis Tabla stands in front of the 1,000-seat sanctuary being added to Ebenezer Community Church in Brooklyn Park, Minn. "It was nothing short of a miracle" to get a \$5.5 million loan in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic last May, Tabla said. Construction began last fall and completion is expected this spring.



Ed Olson, Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention disaster relief unit director delivers 25 pallets of hand sanitizer to the Minnesota VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) warehouse to be distributed around the state to food pantries, shelters and other non-profits in need.

A clean start for a church—and its neighbors

By Grace Thornton

NAMPA, Idaho — When Anders Snyder met Josh*, the man was leaning on the side of the church, head in his hands.

“He was released from jail that day,” Snyder said. “He didn’t know where to go, what to do, and he didn’t come to the church to see anybody. He was just sitting in our shade. He was just kind of hopeless, lost, no plans.”

So, Snyder went and sat beside him and asked him what his story was. The two went to lunch, and when Snyder shared the gospel with him, Josh said he didn’t know anyone cared, let alone God. He thought he was one of society’s throwaways.

The idea of being loved was a brand-new thing, and the idea of a different life even newer.

“We’ve been walking with Josh for awhile now, and he’s responded to Jesus,” Snyder said. “He comes from a broken family and started using drugs when he

was way too young to even think about that kind of stuff.”

Loving Nampa

It’s not an uncommon story in the Nampa, Idaho neighborhood where Snyder and his wife, Jessica, moved to help replant Calvary Church Nampa. For a long time, a lot of people there have needed a new story, and the church did, too. That’s what brought the Snyders there. The call to lead a replant—to help a dying church turn things around—had burned in their hearts for a few years before God brought them to the city of nearly 100,000.

When they arrived, they found a diverse community waiting for them, one with both Mormon and Christian influences but few healthy churches. Neighborhoods around the church with a mix of Anglo and Hispanic residents were aging and declining, Snyder said. Drugs are a big problem there, as is poverty and hunger.

But they’re all about offering new stories at Calvary Church Nampa, and they’re showing the neighborhood the kind of care that drew in Josh. They’ve gone door-to-door passing out Christmas cookies and light bulbs with the goal of loving their neighbors and creating a chance to share how Jesus loves them, too.

“We wanted to be in a context where people from the periphery can hear that message that we care, and God does, and so we’re going to put effort into being right in the mix with you,” Snyder said.

And one day while they were at the laundromat giving out free soap and change for laundry, they met a woman named Trina* who had a story like Josh’s. God worked right there amid the washing machines, Snyder said. A church member named Shawna was able to share her faith with Trina and tell her about the love she had found in Jesus.

“It was the same thing as Josh. She had no idea that anybody cared like that, let alone God,” Snyder said. “She accepted Christ that day.”

But even with a clean start spiritually, Trina still had some things in her life to deal with.

“Two weeks later, she was back in jail because of lingering things from her choices, and so we lost track of her for more than a month,” Snyder said. “My first time ever talking on a phone through the glass at a



Anders and Jessica Snyder, 2021 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering missionaries, moved to Nampa, Idaho to replant a dying church that needed help to turn things around. Now, Calvary Church Nampa is becoming a congregation focused on reaching and sharing the gospel with their community. NAMB photo by Ben Rollins Photography.

jail was with her when we finally dug up where she was. And she was in tears, like, ‘You came? You came to see me?’”

Absolutely, he told her. She was a sister in Christ, and as her family, they were going to walk with her. And even then, he could already see the Holy Spirit at work in her life. She shared with him that she didn’t understand it, but she had felt drawn to pray and be thankful instead of despairing.

Seeing fruit

“We believe the gospel affects lives and changes people,” Snyder said.

The Snyders believe a church that comes back to life can be a strong witness to that.

“It tells a compelling testimony of the resurrected Christ, that something can come back from the dead,” he said.

So far, they’ve seen God grow their little church from a core team of around 35 members to more than 100 people. The Snyders didn’t go in trying to make the

church the next cool place to be. They simply preached the gospel and urged members to develop deeper relationships with one another and go into the neighborhoods sharing the hope of the gospel.

Shifting cultures in the church is a slow process, Snyder said, but over time, God has given them momentum and opened hearts to the message of hope in Jesus.

“We hope to be a multiplying, a sending, preparing kind of a place, as well as just keeping the doors open,” Snyder said. “And I pray that it reverberates out to the nations.”

The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® provides half of NAMB’s annual budget, and 100 percent of the proceeds go to serve missionaries in the field. The offering is used on the field for training, support and care for missionaries like the Snyders and for evangelism resources.

*Names have been changed



Anders Snyder, a 2021 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering missionary, has seen new life breathed into a church in Nampa, Idaho even during a pandemic, new believers have been baptized at Calvary Church Nampa, a church that Snyder helped to replant after the congregation nearly ceased to exist. NAMB photo by Ben Rollins Photography.

Mission Gifts from the Churches

MINNESOTA WISCONSIN BAPTIST CONVENTION COOPERATIVE PROGRAM GIVING

January - February 2021

CP YTD Budget	\$63,109.48
CP YTD Receipts	\$113,573.36
OVER Budget YTD	\$50,463.88

NAME CP

BAY LAKES BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bethany Baptist Church, Tilleda	\$194.40
Bethel, Green Bay	\$166.66
Community Bible Church, Black Creek	\$1,074.00
Fellowship Baptist Church, Waupaca	\$579.78
First Baptist Church, Clintonville	\$248.85
Fox Valley Hmong, Appleton	\$180.00
Graceway Fellowship, Green Bay	\$1,630.83
Highland Crest, Green Bay	\$15,175.68
Living Vine Church, Neenah	\$50.00
Mapledale, Sheboygan	\$291.31
New Beginnings, Manitowoc	\$258.40
Tapestry, Stevens Point	\$100.00
Valley Baptist Church, Appleton	\$6,375.50
BLBA TOTAL	\$26,325.41

SOUTHERN WI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Campus Community, Madison	\$300.00
Cornerstone Church, Waterloo	\$600.00
Doxa Church, Madison	\$11,081.63
East Madison, Madison	\$475.00
First Baptist Church, WI Rapids	\$50.00
Gospel Baptist Church, Sparta	\$401.47
Livingstone, Madison	\$214.00
Shalom Christian Assembly, Madison	\$50.00
Midvale Baptist Church, Madison	\$2,629.74
Rock of Hope, Wisconsin Dells	\$400.00
Rolling Hills, Platteville	\$1,941.83
Sovereign Joy, Madison	\$2,294.99
Trinity Baptist Church, Reedsburg	\$2,875.00
United Hmong, Sun Prairie	\$150.00
SWBA TOTAL	\$23,463.66

LAKELAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Crossroads Church, Pewaukee	\$1,033.19
Ephesians Baptist, Milwaukee	\$600.00
Hope Community Church, Racine	\$179.43
Immanuel (Racine), Mt. Pleasant	\$1,371.10
Korean Baptist Church, Milwaukee	\$900.00
Mercy Memorial, Milwaukee	\$100.00
Missio Dei Fellowship, Kenosha	\$2,248.00
Mt Horeb Baptist Church, Milwaukee	\$150.00
Parkside Baptist Church, Kenosha	\$1,390.09
Pleasant Prairie, Pleasant Prairie	\$744.00
Westlake Church, Mequon	\$100.00
Westosha Baptist Church, Bassett	\$146.00
LBA TOTAL	\$8,961.81

SOUTHERN MN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Austin Baptist Church, Austin	\$349.60
Chester Woods, Rochester	\$33.00
Cornerstone Community, Winona	\$756.23
Emmanuel, Rochester	\$3,829.83
Grace Baptist Church, Willmar	\$25.00
Hiawatha Valley Baptist, Red Wing	\$2,455.50
Hmong Baptist Church, Eyota	\$532.00
Park Fellowship, Sartell	\$1,146.32
Primera Iglesia, Austin	\$394.10
Radiant Life Church, Marshall	\$252.07
Redemption City, Rochester	\$3,762.12
Viola Bible Church, Viola	\$288.50
SMNBA TOTAL	\$13,824.27

TWIN CITIES METRO BAPTIST ASSN.

All Peoples Church, Minneapolis	\$1,080.00
Bethel Baptist, Sunfish Lake	\$1,200.00
Calvary Church, New Prague	\$4,183.97
Cities Church, St. Paul	\$5,000.00
Ebenezer Community, Brooklyn	\$800.00
Eternal Life Hmong, Oakdale	\$168.00
First Ukrainian Ev, St. Louis Park	\$250.00
Good News Hmong, Fridley	\$500.00
Grace Bible Church, Monticello	\$900.00
Gracepoint, Minneapolis	\$100.00
Hope of Nations Fell., Minnetonka	\$151.50
Iglesia Hispana Betel, St. Paul	\$250.00
Journey Church (First Baptist), Amery WI	\$5,000.00
MN Kangnam Korean, Bloomington	\$300.00
New Hope Baptist, Minneapolis	\$250.00
Northwood Community, Maple Grove	\$333.34
Roseville Baptist, Roseville	\$3,000.00
Salt City Church, St. Paul	\$5,400.00
Shalom Community, Minneapolis	\$373.11
Southtown Baptist, Bloomington	\$5,588.25
True Light Chinese, Bloomington	\$200.00
Twin City Hmong, St. Paul	\$334.00
Unlock Church, Maple Grove	\$200.00
Vietnamese Baptist, Sunfish Lake	\$60.00
TCMBA TOTAL	\$35,622.17

NORTHWOODS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Berean Baptist, Ely	\$140.00
Calvary Pines, Grand Rapids	\$529.00
Cross Pointe Church, Cambridge	\$500.00
Eagles Nest, Pequot Lakes	\$579.94
Grace Connection, Wadena	\$150.00
Hill City Baptist Church, Hill city	\$100.00
Hope Baptist Church, Rice Lake	\$750.00
Ridgewood Baptist Church, Bemidji	\$320.00
Westside Baptist, Warroad	\$1,457.10
NWBA TOTAL	\$4,526.04

OTHER

Jacob's Well, Eau Claire WI	\$850.00
OTHER TOTAL	\$850.00

MWBC TOTAL RECEIVED \$ 113,573.36

NOTE: No giving received by MWBC-affiliated churches not listed above during stated giving periods

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