

Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist

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SBC steers to the right, but not as far as some wanted

By **Ken Camp**
Managing Editor,
Baptist Standard

NASHVILLE – Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting continued to steer the denomination in a conservative direction but resisted efforts to push it farther to the right.

At the same time, they sharply rebuked the SBC Executive Com-

mittee at several points and raised serious questions about the accountability and transparency of some SBC entities.

The annual meeting drew 15,726 messengers—the largest crowd in 25 years, though far short of the record 45,519 messengers who attended the Dallas convention in 1985.

Ed Litton elected SBC

See **MEETING** page 2

SBC sees most messengers since 1995

By **Jonathan Howe**

NASHVILLE (BP) – Last week's 2021 SBC Annual Meeting was the largest since 1995, and much of that had to do with the location and the involvement of first-time messengers to the convention.

A survey conducted of those in attendance showed that nearly 80

percent of messengers drove to the June 15-16 meeting in Nashville. The Music City's proximity to a large number of Southern Baptists was a main reason for the capacity crowd of 15,726 messengers, not counting guests, exhibitors and others present at Nashville's Music City Center (MCC).

However, it wasn't just people from the South who attended. For the second consecutive annual meeting, messengers represented all 50 states plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

Another reason for the increase in messengers was the number of first-time messengers in attendance. Two out of every five messengers (38 percent)



Ben and Kayla Seamans (left), co-directors of Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention's disaster relief ministries, visit with Paul and Cheryl Fries at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Nashville. Fries leads Salem Baptist Association in Liberty, Tenn.

Commentary

What happened in Nashville?

By **Gary Ledbetter**
Editor,
Southern Baptist Texan

It's been a while since a meeting of the SBC garnered so much interest from outside press. For that reason, convention goers heard from friends and family asking, "I heard (insert dire and distorted report) happened at the SBC!" This interest from those who didn't attend, or who aren't even Southern Baptists,

was keener this year, and it was driven by non-Baptist media. I'd even go so far as to say that some outlets tried to put a finger on the scales of a deliberative body in which they had no personal investment. Here are some things you might have heard:

 **The SBC elected a liberal as president.**

Nope. The word,

See **NASHVILLE** page 13



The largest Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting since 1995 crowded the halls of the Music City Center in Nashville, Tenn., in June. Photo by Karen McCutcheon.

See **SBC** page 12

September is the
Month of Prayer for State Missions.
Follow MWBC Pray on Facebook.

MEETING

continued from page one

president

Southern Baptists elected a president best known for his involvement in racial reconciliation, narrowly defeating a candidate associated with the Conservative Baptist Network.

In a runoff election for president, Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church in Saraland, Ala., edged out Mike Stone, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Blackshear, Ga., who serves on the Conservative Baptist Network steering council, by 556 votes.

Lee Brand Jr., vice president and dean of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and also a member of the Conservative Baptist Network's steering council—was elected as first vice president. Ramon Medina, lead pastor of the Spanish ministry at Champion Forest Baptist Church in Houston, was elected second vice president, defeating another member of the network's steering council, Javier Chavez of Gainesville, Ga.

In a four-way race for president, Stone and Litton emerged as the front-runners. On the first ballot, Stone—a former chair of the SBC Executive Committee—received 5,216 votes, and Litton—who endorsed the “Justice, Repentance and the SBC” statement on race—received 4,630 votes.

Eliminated after the initial ballot was Al Mohler, president

of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who drew 3,764 votes. Mohler had been the presumptive favorite when he first announced his candidacy prior to the 2020 SBC meeting, which was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also eliminated was Randy Adams, executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention, who received 673 votes.

Litton was nominated by Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans—the only African American elected as SBC president.

Stone had been instrumental in a controversial SBC Executive Committee investigation of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, and he most recently had been accused of stonewalling efforts to deal with sexual abuse in SBC-affiliated churches.

SBC Executive Committee suffers defeats

SBC messengers not only narrowly rejected Stone as president, but also overwhelmingly rejected a business and financial plan proposed by the SBC Executive Committee. Among other recommendations, the plan would have given the Executive Committee authority to escrow Cooperative Program funds from any convention entity that did not comply with items on a prescribed checklist.

Vance Pitman, a pastor from Las Vegas, said the proposed plan would have been “an unprecedented expansion of the Executive Committee’s

powers and would put itself between the local churches and the entities we are trying to support with the Cooperative Program.”

Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, also spoke against the measure, saying all six Southern Baptist seminary presidents opposed it because it would jeopardize the schools’ standing with accrediting agencies.

SBC messengers also rejected a recommendation to revise the ministry assignments of Lifeway Christian Resources, transferring college student ministry to the North American Mission Board. The college student ministry assignment, however, was not the issue voiced on the floor by those who objected to the changes, but rather the removal from LifeWay’s assignment the responsibility for providing home school resources.

Messengers approved Vision 2025, a strategic plan proposed by SBC Executive Committee President Ronnie Floyd, but only after amending it to include an additional objective: “to eliminate all incidents of sex abuse and racial discrimination among our churches.”

Grant Gaines, pastor of Belle Aire Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tenn., moved that an independent task force be created to investigate the SBC Executive Committee’s handling of sexual abuse allegations rather than allow the Executive Committee to guide an investigation of

itself. Messengers overwhelmingly approved the motion.

Resolutions approved on race, abortion and Equality Act

At multiple points, messengers and speakers addressed controversy regarding critical race theory, an academic theory that addresses systemic racism and that has become a hot-button issue both in the SBC and secular politics in the past year.

Messengers approved—but not without debate—a broadly worded resolution that did not specifically name critical race theory but stated SBC messengers “reject any theory or worldview that finds the ultimate identity of human beings in ethnicity or in any other group dynamic.”

The resolution denounced “any theory or worldview that denies that racism, oppression or discrimination is rooted, ultimately, in anything other than sin.” It also reaffirmed the 1995 resolution in which SBC messengers apologized to African Americans for “condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism.”

A resolution presented by the convention’s resolutions committee called any effort to repeal the Hyde Amendment—which bars the use of federal funds to pay for abortions, except to save the mother’s life or in cases of rape or incest—as being “morally abhorrent, a violation of biblical ethics, contrary to natural law, and a moral stain

on our nation.”

The resolution also urged Southern Baptists to work to “end the moral scourge of abortion as we also seek to love, care for, and minister to women who are victimized by the unjust abortion industry.”

However, that language was not potent enough for Bill Ascol, a messenger from Oklahoma and a prominent figure in the Calvinist-oriented Founders Ministries. He made a motion that the committee be overruled and messengers be allowed to vote on a resolution calling for the abolition of abortion in the United States. His motion received the necessary two-thirds approval.

When messengers debated Ascol’s resolution, a motion to postpone indefinitely the resolution failed. However, messengers approved an amendment adding the word “alone” to the resolution, saying the SBC cannot embrace “an incremental approach alone” when it comes to seeking abortion’s abolition. The resolution was adopted as amended.

Messengers also approved a resolution denouncing the Equality Act, calling it “one of the greatest threats to religious liberty in our nation’s history.”

An amendment to the SBC’s constitution naming racism and the mishandling of sexual abuse as grounds for disfellowshipping a church gained approval for the second time, as required by governing documents.

Back to the beginning

The goodness of God: Thoughts on Josh & Rachel's Wedding

It's been four days since the wedding, but I'm still tired.

What a week it was, working on the bride and groom's house, visiting with family and friends, and making last-minute preparations for the wedding itself. Our days were long—up by 7 a.m. and falling back into bed about midnight. Much



Perspectives
Leo Endel

of my time was spent in sanding, patching, and painting; most of Sarah's time in packing and moving Rachel's belongings from one house to another about 15 minutes apart. Sarah got black and blue marks on her arms and legs; I got charley horses in my left leg. Physically it was a demanding week.

Emotionally it was equally exhausting but extremely satisfying. We were doing what needed to be done and were overjoyed with the marriage.

In preparation for photo presentations, we went through hundreds of family pictures. Visually we relived the journey of our family. It seemed like a lifetime ago when the girls played in the leaves together, played hostess at our open houses,

played with their American Girl dolls, and played volleyball and basketball together. The journey seemed so long ago, but the memories were sweet and good. We were blessed then; we are blessed now.

On Sunday afternoon, the flowers were over two hours late, throwing off the entire schedule. As a result, Rachel's aunts were rushing to finish decorating the wedding arch and tables, so the pictures could be taken with the flowers in place. We were scrambling to finish the rehearsal only 40 minutes before the beginning of the ceremony, but, somehow, we weren't stressed.

At the appointed time, we were lined up and the music was playing. Even Lola (Rachel's golden retriever) was in position and calmly awaiting the processional. My girls, Sarah, Lydia, and, of course, Rachel were stunning (see the picture). The busyness of the moment kept me from



Picture by Cari Griffith Photography. Find her on Facebook at Cari Griffith Photography. Cari is one of Rachel's dearest friends.

becoming reflective and getting emotional. After all, I had done this many, many times, but this was Rachel, my daughter. It was not the same. I feared a tsunami of emotions would overwhelm me, but graciously the Lord brought joy and a smile.

At 3 p.m., I nodded to Josh's dad, Chris, who would play the processional on his guitar, and the wedding party began to slowly enter the pavilion. When Rachel and I stood in the doorway, Chris began Pachelbel's Canon in D, and Rachel and I stepped into the room. That's when I felt a tremor of

emotion, calmed it, and then smiled remembering that this was an awesome, special, even supernatural moment—the two were about to become one. I could feel the goodness of God—His love and their love for each other. I relaxed and rejoiced in the goodness of God.

The minister always has the best view of the wedding as he stands in front of the couple, takes in their private moments, and sees the smiles and tears of the congregation. I can't overstate how extraordinary it is to stand next to your daughter and

See **WEDDING** page 11

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Why go to church

Last week we made our first road trip in more than a year, a thousand-mile round trip to Santa Fe at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. People were everywhere. The roads were packed, as were the usual stops at McDonalds and



Reflections
Bill Tinsley

Love's. Restaurants were busy with waits of an hour or more. The year of isolation appears to be over, and everyone wants to go somewhere.

But will we return to church? Michelle Boorstein, writing for the Washington Post,

pondered the question: "All year clergy have been waiting to see if slews of people will decide to become virtual-only members, flit between multiple virtual services, or just quit congregational life altogether."

As I have thought about it, I have asked myself the question, "Why should I go to church?"

I should go to church because, down deep, I

believe in Jesus Christ. I think it is what He would want me to do. Even though the Jewish authorities turned against Him, it was always Jesus' custom, or "habit" to attend the synagogue each Sabbath. (Luke 4:16). And even though churches are seldom what they ought to be, I need to follow Jesus' example.

I go because I need to be encouraged in my

See **CHURCH** page 7

Holding on to the Cross While Helping Others

A defining feature of Christianity is the impulse God places in the Christ follower to help others. Our baptism by immersion portrays our being buried in the likeness of Christ's death and raised to walk in newness of life. God has replaced our darkness with light and we now live in ways that glorify God and help others.

We are emerging from our ways of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. As we take stock of ourselves and others around us we see that people have changed in some profound ways. People who were struggling before the pandemic had some kind of transition in their work

or personal lives occur in this past year. People who were not struggling still may have decided to make changes given the break in their regular routines.

It is easier to locate hurting people today,

either because more people than ever are hurting or people are more willing to talk about their hurts. Regardless, one may easily find through casual conversation a person in need of help. Christians, when faced with this hurt, feel compelled to act.

With more people expressing hurts and asking for help, we must remind ourselves to stay close to the cross of Jesus Christ. An artist once illustrated the need

to stay connected and stable while helping others. The artist drew a person with one arm around a tree and one arm outstretched to help someone who had fallen into a hole. The implication is that if the helper lets go of the tree, the helper will not be able to help the one who had fallen. The possibility also exists that the helper may fall into the hole as well.

My sanctified imagination makes it easy for me to mentally replace that tree with the cross of Jesus Christ. I have felt the impulse to help hurting people around me. I am astounded at how easily I can become pre-occupied with the hurts of others to the point of forgetting to keep my arm securely around the cross. In the face of so much pain

See **HOLDING** page 6



Leadership
Clint Calvert

Working together

In the busyness of summer, it is good to see our church families working together to accomplish the tasks of ministry. Here are

some examples from Emmanuel Baptist Church in Rochester, Minn.



Partnership and Prayer

Steve Melvin

1. Erecting permanent basketball goals provided opportunities for people to work together to dig holes, mix concrete, and level the base for the goal. And when the concrete had set,

more people worked together to erect the pole, backboard and rim. The basketball goals are now in use during the basketball camp.

2. To get the disaster relief shower trailer on site in Rochester for summer ministries, several people worked together to pull it from its winter home, and then set it up and prepare it for use. The shower trailer is now in use during the summer ministries.

3. Praying, planning and preparing are all a part of working together to partner with a church from Fulton, Mo., to assist with ministry opportunities. Ministering to children in a city park, being involved in community service in another city park, working on improvements on the church building, and leading a Basketball Camp for 25 kids have all been a part of our working together.

Ministry was never intended to be done alone. Jesus always seemed to have disciples around to be involved in ministry. For our congregations in Wisconsin and Minnesota, we need to work together to accomplish the plans and purposes that God has designed each of us to accomplish locally as well as regionally.

1 Corinthians 3:9 says it this way: "For we are God's coworkers. You are God's field, God's building."

We are better working together.

Steve Melvin is partnership and prayer catalyst for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

Changes in disaster relief funding

Kayla and I just returned from our first national convention in Nashville followed by the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) round-table. It was quite overwhelming with all the changes happening. Here's a short update on how we are affected in Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention disaster relief.



Disaster Relief
Ben Seamans

Organizationally, SEND is the umbrella under which all missions are coordinated. SEND Relief is the parent of both International and domestic crisis responses, bringing SBDR and Baptist Global

Response under one roof. This will streamline coordination of crisis response efforts in the SBC. SBDR is the primary crisis responder and Send Relief will operate and

fund other efforts such as human trafficking intervention.

However, there is no longer a cooperative program agreement between NAMB and SBDR, excluding disaster relief from any regular funding. SBDR will receive special funds and materials during times of need at the localities affected. This means MWBC DR is funded solely by our State Missions Offering and private donors. This is a big task with big needs so please consider becoming a regular partner in this ministry.

Here's a great way to do this. Home Depot

and Lowe's have both partnered with SBDR on a national level. Like Amazon Smile, you can register any credit card used for purchases and 5 percent will automat-

ically be dispersed to a national account. We can submit our expenditures for maintenance, deployment costs,

See **FUNDING** page 10

Collegiate investments pay off

It was May 13 at 10 p.m. I received a Facebook message from Sharon Her. "Can you call me when you have a minute? I have some unfortunate news to share."

She is the younger sister of Kao Ly Ilean Her. The unfortunate news that Sharon needed to share was that Ilean had died earlier in the day from complications of COVID-19. She asked if I would bring a message for the family at Ilean's memorial service.

I first met Ilean on the parking lot of Roseville (Minn.) Baptist Church as she and a handful of other students gathered to begin the long trek from the Twin Cities to Glorieta, N.M., for Collegiate Week. Ilean was actively involved in Baptist Student Union and was a key leader in the first church that I planted in the early 1990's, St. Anthony Park Chapel.

Collegiate church planting wasn't as popular then as it has become today.

Ilean, along with about two dozen other Hmong university students, were actively involved with Roseville Hmong Baptist Church where they served in a variety of leadership roles. They encouraged me to start a church where they could invite

their English-speaking friends.

When St. Anthony Park Chapel launched, about 80 percent of the attendees were Hmong. The summer following her graduation from Hamline University, Ilean was commissioned to serve as a summer missionary to French-speaking Benin in West Africa. As part of her debriefing following her service she shared with me, "Bob, for several years I have wrestled with the question of where God is calling me to serve. Even though I had a very fruitful ministry in Benin, I believe God is leading me to serve in public life."

God has honored that calling. In 1994, she graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School. In 1996 she became the first Hmong woman admitted to the Minnesota Bar Association. In 1997 she became the executive director of the Council of Asian Pacific Minnesotans. In 1998 she co-founded Allies for Mentoring Asian Youth. In 2006 she was a founding member of Hmong Women Achieving Together. In 2019 became the first Hmong-American elected to the University of Minnesota Board

of Regents. In 1987 when I first began talking about planting a church in a university neighborhood, I was told, "That is a foolish idea. University students don't have any money and they don't stay around." The Michael



Student Ministries

Bob Smith

Vision Refresh 2021

As we head into our annual state convention meeting for 2021, we host our second annual planter gathering in conjunction with the meeting.

We once hosted these two as separate events but found that combining them allowed us to host one of the largest annual meetings we have had, allowed for planters and pastors to feel valued and make connections with one another, and involved the planter in the business life of the MWBC. Interestingly, the national annual meeting in Nashville did the same thing this year with their Send Network event being the first day before the convention started, and the turnout was great.

In year two we wanted to do more than gather. We wanted to, in the words of Jonathan Parnell our

Twin Cities city missionary, "put in some work."

That work will be a refresh of our vision and the critical pieces we want to see in our plants. The vision refresh will

allow us to evaluate our top five virtues so that we can equip and celebrate toward greater and more expansive growth in these areas.

What are the top five virtues? First, it is important to know that virtues and values are different, while they may overlap at certain levels. Values are more ideological, while virtues are more actual. Our top virtues, or actions are:

1. New churches
2. New residencies
3. New Leadership pipelines
4. New baptisms
5. New partners

At the end of the day, we want to see new churches started. We believe we can create a reciprocal

rate of starting new churches by developing leadership pipelines and residencies. From these, we believe, a focus on and expectation of baptisms is critical. Along the way, we will need new partners at every turn.

These five virtues help us maintain our three values. What are our three values for starting new churches?

1. Greater ability toward self-sustaining
2. Raising up indigenous leaders from pews to pulpits
3. Foster engagement and cooperation on mission

These values and virtues have allowed us to maintain more than a 5 percent growth increase over the past three years. These virtues and values not only enable us to grow at a healthy pace, but also create a DNA for our churches that will allow them to be here 100 years from now.

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



Church Planting

Joshua Whetstine

of Regents.

In 1987 when I first began talking about planting a church in a university neighborhood, I was told, "That is a foolish idea. University students don't have any money and they don't stay around." The Michael

Halls, the Kami Bakers, the Out, Oi and Yislang Vangs, and the Sharon and Ilean Hers would disagree.

Thank you, Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptists for your investment in the lives of young adults whose faith has begun and been

nurtured during their university years. Only heaven will reveal the ripple effect of your commitment to reach this generation.

Bob Smith is student ministries catalyst for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

Good news from the associations

TWIN CITIES

Westview Church in Crystal baptized three people then celebrated with a picnic dinner on May 23. The church celebrates their first anniversary in July. Brett Toney is church starter.

Pastor Jacob Christy started a third church on June 19 to reach Asian Indians in the Twin Cities. The congregation meets at Cross View Church in Edina.

Twenty-six people gathered June 2 at Favor Beauty Salon in St. Paul for the first Bible study and prayer meeting of a new church being planted by Ebenezer Community Church of Brooklyn Park. Church planter Richard Johnson led the service and sending church pastor Francis Tabla taught the Bible study.

Salt City Church in Minneapolis baptized 43 people on Apr. 25. Drew Stevenson is pastor.

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA

A new church is being planted in St. Cloud thanks to a partnership between Harvest Fellowship Church, Iglesia Primera Bautista in Austin, the SMBA, the MWBC, and the North American Mission Board. Eber and Meli Argueta are planters of the new church, La Cosecha en Espanol.

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

A team of six pastors from the Heart of Texas Baptist Network (HTBN) visited Wisconsin in June as the partnership develops between that association of 61 churches and SWBCA. The team was led by Zac Harrel, associational missions strategist for HTBN, which covers four counties in the center of Texas and has its office in Brownwood, Texas.



Rolling Hills Church in Platteville officially moved into their new building on Sunday, May 2. Built through a fund raising campaign carried out in the midst of COVID-19, the building sits on 5.6 acres near the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.



Pastor Chuck Bradbury, right, is congratulated by SWBCA associational missions strategist Mark Millman on his coming retirement Aug. 31, 2021 after 15 years as pastor of First Baptist, Wisconsin Rapids. "We pray for God's best as Chuck and Pat enter into this season of life," Millman said. Bradbury has been in ministry more than three decades.

HOLDING

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around us, we risk burn-out and lack of effectiveness as a helper if we ever let go of that cross.

Fanny Crosby reminds us of the power of the cross in her hymn "Near the Cross"

*Jesus, keep me near the cross,
There a precious fountain;
Free to all, a healing stream,
Flows from Calv'ry's mountain.*

*In the cross, in the cross
Be my glory ever,
Till my ransomed soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.*

May Jesus keep us near the cross for our sake and the sake of those we help.

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

Back to the beginning

SBC provides backpacks for churches to distribute

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Nashville last month were able to pick up free backpacks and learn about a special program that provides up to 72 backpacks to churches free of charge.

Churches are urged to participate in a nationwide backpack event the weekend of Sept. 18-19, passing out free backpacks

filled with supplies for people who need them.

To get started, participating churches can register at www.sendrelief.org/backpacks for the free backpacks, provided by SEND Relief, a collaboration between the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board.

Each church decides whom to bless with the filled backpacks. Here are some ideas:

- Pack school supplies for students in low-income families.
- Pack stuffed animals and fresh sets of clothes for children in the foster care system.
- Pack hygiene kits and household essentials for newly arrived refugee families.
- Pack food for those who are experiencing food insecurity.
- Pack care items for a local women's or children's shelter in your area.

Love Covers

Hatred stirs up conflicts,
but love covers all offenses.
Proverbs 10:12

Above all, maintain constant
love for one another, since love
covers a multitude of sins.
1 Peter 4:8

Let that person know that
whoever turns a sinner
from the error of his way
will save his soul from death
and cover a multitude of sins.
James 5:20

Love your neighbor
as yourself. But if you bite
and devour one another,
watch out, or you will be
consumed by one another.
Galatians 5:14-15

By this everyone will know
that you are my disciples,
if you love one another.
John 13:35



Photo Credit: Charl Folcher on Unsplash

MWBC organizes GoFundMe for Philip and Jummai Nache

ROCHESTER, Minn. — The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention has organized a GoFundMe page for Philip Nache, church planter of Hope of Nations Gospel Church in Minneapolis, and his wife Jummai, who became seriously ill after receiving her second COVID-19 vaccination on Feb. 1 of this year, resulting in the amputation of both legs below the knees.

The couple were among North American Mission Board missionaries featured in the 2019 Week of Prayer for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

As of July 5, just under \$17,000 had been raised of the \$500,000 GoFundMe goal. The money is being raised to help cover medical expenses.

"Many of you have been praying for Jummai and Philip Nache during these difficult days," Leo Endel, MWBC executive director, wrote on the [GoFundMe page](#). "Their faith in the Lord has continued strong de-



Philip and Jummai Nache

spite the difficulty of their journey. As most of you know, Jummai has undergone the amputation of her two legs below the knee and will later lose most of her two hands. What lies ahead is an expensive and painful journey of healing that will include costly prosthetics, additional surgery, and necessary modifications to their lifestyle including modifications to their home and a different vehicle."

Endel thanked M-W Baptists for their faithfulness in prayer and asked them to also be generous in financial assistance. NAMB and MWBC

"will do all we can to support the Naches but we will need your help," he said.

Working as a medical assistant at a clinic in Minneapolis, Jummai began having chest pain after her second vaccination dose and went to an urgent care facility where she was diagnosed with COVID-19. She was hospitalized a few days later with a deteriorating heart and placed on a ventilator. In addition to heart and respiratory issues, she has been diagnosed as having an arterial blood clot, anemia, and multiple inflammatory syndrome.

CHURCH

continued from page three

faith and I want to encourage others. While I have been disappointed by some pastors and church leaders over the years, I have found many more that inspire me. I find that going to church lifts my spirits. Other believers take an interest in me and pray for me. And I seek to do the same for them. (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13).

I go to church because churches make the world a better place. All

churches, as we know, are flawed. Someone once asked me if I knew of any churches that did not have any problems. I asked if he knew of churches that didn't have any people. Where there are people, there will be problems. But most churches seek ways to feed the hungry, help the poor, comfort the grieving and care for the aging. Churches pull us outside ourselves and call us to a higher and better world.

I go because I want my children to

go. Even though my children are grown and gone, I still want to be an example to them, as I sought to be when I was raising them. Going to church is a discipline. Sometimes I don't feel like it. But I have learned over the years that the best things in life require effort. Worship, Christian fellowship and service are disciplines that I believe are worth passing on to the next generation.

I am sure there are many other reasons why people attend church.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MWBC events are in bold print.

Associational events are in color.

BLBA: Bay Lakes Baptist Association

SWBA: Southern Wisconsin Baptist Association

LBA: Lakeland Baptist Association

NBA: Northwoods Baptist Association

SMBA: Southern Minnesota Baptist Association

TCMBA: Twin Cities Metro Baptist Association

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

SEPTEMBER

1-30 Season of Prayer for State Missions

6 Labor Day – **MWBC Office Closed**

17-18 MWBC Executive Board, Rochester, Minn.

OCTOBER

1-3 Called Out Youth Conference, Baraboo Wis.

21 Annual Church Planter Forum – Ebenezer Community Church, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

22 Pastors Conference – Ebenezer Community Church, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

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

NOVEMBER

6 SWBA Annual Meeting, Trinity Baptist, Reedsburg, Wis.

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

There are other reasons why I do as well, but these are the three that stand out in my mind.

Soon, I hope, churches will be filled with welcoming smiles, warm embraces and joyful singing. As the Scripture says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging

one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching," (Heb. 10:24-25).

Bill Tinsley is a former executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention. Appearing in various local newspapers around the country, his column "reflects" on current events and life experiences from a faith perspective.

Back to the beginning

WMU illustrates value of children's missions discipleship

By Julie Walters

NASHVILLE (BP) — “We have more knowledge at our fingertips than ever before, but our kids and grandkids still need us to teach them about certain things, and missions is one of those things,” said Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of national WMU, as she addressed messengers and guests at the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting June 16. “When we were growing up, many of us learned about missions. It changed our worldview and our view of the world.

“As a child, from my small church in southern Illinois, I experienced God’s heart for all the nations,” Wisdom-Martin said. “Every week I traveled around the world to learn what God was doing. I was taught to pray, to give sacrificially, to do missions, to tell others about Jesus, and, maybe most impor-

tantly, to take my part in God’s plan.”

Connie Dixon, who was elected president of national WMU on June 13, agreed.

“Our kids still need us – now more than ever,” Dixon said. “If we don’t teach our kids to value missions, who will fulfill the Great Commission when we are gone?”

Speaking of the importance of missions in the life of a child, Jerry Haag, president and CEO of One More Child, said his love for missions began in Royal Ambassadors.

“My RA leader, Mr. Biggs, taught me a love for the outdoors and God’s creation,” Haag said. “Maggie, one of the women in our church, taught me the power of prayer.

“As I look back, I remember loving and memorizing God’s Word and seeing Scripture come alive. I also remember learning about missionaries, and

knowing someday, I wanted to be a fulltime missionary or be involved in missions.”

Liz Encinia, executive director-treasurer of Kentucky WMU, said, “For me, missions discipleship was more than just a program in the church. It laid the foundation of what it meant to actively further the Great Commission as a Southern Baptist.”

She said the lessons helped her understand the challenges facing missionaries and ways they told others about Jesus, and missions projects offered her practical steps to put her faith into action.

“Missions discipleship was about developing the very heartbeat of Jesus, seeing the world through His eyes, and responding in obedience to the Gospel call,” she said. “When you teach children about missions, you help prepare the next generation of Southern Baptists to take the Gos-



Connie Dixon of New Mexico was elected president of the national Woman's Missionary Union June 13 in the group's annual meeting at Nashville First Baptist Church. Photo by Abby Duren

pel to the nations.”

For generations, WMU has sought to engage all ages in missions discipleship. Specifically designed for children in grades 1-6, a new curriculum previewed by Wisdom-Martin and Dixon will be available this fall called Missions Journey: Kids.

“Our children grow up so fast,” Wisdom-Martin said. “In what seems like the blink of an eye, our little ones are grown and impacting the world

for Christ. Or are they? What lessons are our children learning? The Gospel is clear. It says, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’ They will gain God’s heart for the nations if we teach them. And they will have fun along the way.”

Visit [wmu.com/missionsjourneykids](https://www.wmu.com/missionsjourneykids) to learn more or download a free sample of Missions Journey: Kids.

Past presidents say SBC must refocus on evangelism, missions and prayer

By Timothy Cokes

NASHVILLE (BP) — The SBC’s future hinges on a reemphasis on evangelism and missions, four former presidents agreed during a panel discussion before the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting.

Former SBC presidents Steve Gaines, Johnny Hunt, James Merritt and Fred Luter, who gathered for a session on the Vision Stage in the exhibit hall of the Music City Center on

June 14, one day before the annual meeting opened, found agreement on the convention’s greatest needs.

Merritt, pastor at Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Ga., who served as SBC president from 2000-2002, said evangelism is “for the most part not on our radar on a day-to-day basis.”

“How often do we pray, ‘God put someone in my path today that I can talk to about Jesus?’” Merritt said. “The two most embar-



Four former SBC presidents (from left), Fred Luter, Steve Gaines, Johnny Hunt and James Merritt, participated in a panel discussion moderated by Jordan Easley (far right). The men agreed that the SBC’s future hinges on a reemphasis on evangelism and missions. Photo by Abby Duren

assing questions you can ask a Christian is when is the last time you led a person to Christ, and when was the last time you tried?”

Gaines, pastor at Bel-

levue Baptist Church near Memphis, said prayer is the key to the ministry and cooperation of the SBC. Gaines served as president from 2016-2018.

“If you love someone, you talk with them and you talk about them,” Gaines said. “If you love Jesus, I believe

See **PRESIDENTS** page 12

A few highlights from 2021 SBC Annual Meeting in Nashville

By **Ronnie Floyd**

While the SBC Annual Meeting is now part of our history, let's not forget a few of the great highlights. We each will remember some things personally and we will discover others as we dialogue with friends. I want to share a few special highlights I believe are worthy of mention.

1. 70 days before the SBC Annual Meeting began, we were not even certain we could have the gathering in Nashville. At that time, our CFO and Convention Manager, Jeff Pearson, gathered the respective Nashville parties in a virtual meeting, and God began to make the way possible. We were already in dialogue with other cities if all parties could not come together in Nashville to host us.

Then, God intervened miraculously. From seventy days prior to the beginning of the SBC Annual Meeting, all matters were readjusted, renegotiated, replanned, and completely redirected to downtown Nashville from our previous venue. The Music City Center may be one of the greatest convention centers I can remember. The Lord worked a true miracle. Thank God for the incredible staff team and volunteers He used to make this occur.

2. The response to the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting was stunning. While still in a global pandemic which seems to be slowing across the nation, Southern Baptists

came to Nashville in great numbers. This convention was the second largest convention since the 1995 SBC Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, that had a final messenger count of 20,654.

Our 2021 SBC Annual Meeting had a final messenger count of 15,726. While the 1995 messenger count surpassed this year's convention by 4,928 messengers, we still had a terrific response to this year's convention.

In fact, the entire crowd of messengers, guests, and exhibitors were:

- 15,726 Messengers
- 3,823 Guests
- 1,892 Exhibitors
- 21,441 Total Attendance

There are many keys to growing attendance. One of the most important is: the more churches represented, the greater the attendance. In 2019 in Birmingham, we had 3,428 churches sending 8,183 messengers. This year, we had 5,570 churches sending 15,726 messengers.

This is an amazing encouragement for everyone. Thank you for coming. Begin planning now to join us for our 2022 SBC Annual Meeting in Anaheim, Calif., on June 14-15, 2022.

3. God has raised up Dr. Ed Litton as our newly-elected SBC President. While we are grateful for each of the men who permitted their names to be placed into nomination for this position, the Lord has

chosen to raise up Dr. Litton for this moment in our history.

Please begin praying now for Dr. Ed Litton and his wife Kathy. Encourage them when you see them, and always be faithful to pray for them. This is a significant moment in our history and Southern Baptists need to find a way to go forward together.

4. From the SEND Conference highlights to the IMB's Missionary Sending Celebration to significant reports from our entities in our Convention and decisions made by Southern Baptist messengers that will prayerfully move us to being a greater people of God, we need to come away from this year's convention knowing the Lord has been good to His people and has given us favor and blessing to be together.

As always in Baptist life, some of the moments were challenging, others were inspirational, and every now and then, humorous moments helped us all.

We are a big family from all over the United States and beyond. We share a common general belief around the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 and a common conviction and cooperation to advance the Gospel to the entire world. This is our vision!

5. Reaching every person for Jesus Christ in every town, every city, every state, and every nation is what Vision 2025 is all about. Our Conven-

tion endorsed and even amended this vision to carry us forward all the way through the year 2025. These strategic actions are modified for easier communication.

Our churches can come together around:

- Sending 500 more missionaries overseas
- Adding 5,000 more congregations across North America
- Calling out the called
- Reversing the decline in children and teenage baptisms under 18 years of age
- Increasing giving through the Cooperative Program
- Prayerfully endeavoring to eliminate all incidents of sexual abuse and racial discrimination

among our churches.

This is who we are and this is what we are about. Please forward this to your church and let's do this together.

Over 6,000 people have joined our VISION 2025 PRAYER TEAM. We need you to join us. It is simple and helpful. We will be praying for each of these initiatives as well as establishing a community where prayer is encouraged. Please encourage the members of your church, association, state convention, or national entity to do the same by joining this prayer team.

Here is what you need to do: TEXT the word "VISION" to 90885.

Greenway addresses CRT query

By **Art Toalston**

NASHVILLE (BP) — A messenger's question about critical race theory during the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary report to the Southern Baptist Convention June 16 led President Adam W. Greenway to explain the theory's incompatibility with the Baptist Faith and Message, while also apologizing to African American believers who have been offended by the Council of Seminary Presidents' statement about the controversial subject.

Greenway recounted that a statement by the SBC's six seminary presidents in November 2020 was "something

that at a bare minimum we felt like we needed to say, but it is not all that all of us could say" about the issue.

He read from Article 15 in the Baptist Faith and Message on the Christian and the Social Order: "All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in

Mission Gifts from the Churches

MINNESOTA WISCONSIN BAPTIST CONVENTION COOPERATIVE PROGRAM GIVING

June 30, 2021

CP Budget	\$307,668.00
CP Receipts	\$337,299.86
OVER Budget YTD	\$29,631.86

NAME

BAY LAKES BAPTIST ASSOCIATION	CP ¹	LMCO ²	AAEO ³
Amherst, Amherst Bible Church	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Appleton, Fox Valley Hmong	\$180.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Appleton, Valley	\$24,309.33	\$5,245.00	\$16,991.69
Black Creek, Community Bible	\$3,365.00	\$3,281.00	\$0.00
Clintonville, First Baptist Church	\$1,105.65	\$450.00	\$330.00
Green Bay, Bethel	\$499.98	\$0.00	\$0.00
Green Bay, Graceway Fellowship	\$4,323.53	\$1,285.00	\$1,913.00
Green Bay, Highland Crest	\$35,442.28	\$1,446.00	\$626.00
Manitowoc, New Beginnings	\$457.40	\$359.00	\$633.00
Neenah, Living Vine Church	\$250.00	\$860.00	\$560.00
Sheboygan, Mapledale Baptist	\$1,570.52	\$2,172.50	\$735.00
Stevens Point, Tapestry	\$400.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Tilleda, Bethany Baptist Church	\$1,181.90	\$1,875.00	\$1,020.00
Waupaca, Fellowship Baptist	\$1,407.49	\$165.00	\$0.00
BLBA TOTAL	\$74,743.08	\$17,138.50	\$22,808.69

SOUTHERN WI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Boscobel, Blue River Valley	\$468.39	\$120.00	\$120.00
Ft. Atkinson, Casa de Oracion	\$45.00	\$30.00	\$45.00
Janesville, Resonate Church	\$1,699.34	\$0.00	\$0.00
La Crosse, Crossway Church	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$2,295.75
Madison, Campus Community	\$900.00	\$700.00	\$0.00
Madison, Doxa Church	\$27,780.48	\$0.00	\$0.00
Madison, East Madison Baptist	\$3,207.00	\$2,635.00	\$310.00
Madison, Hope In Christ Assembly	\$1,522.42	\$0.00	\$0.00
Madison, Livingstone Baptist	\$986.00	\$500.00	\$700.00
Madison, Midvale Baptist Church	\$6,893.22	\$9,275.00	\$780.00
Madison, Red Village	\$2,500.00	\$1,220.00	\$0.00
Madison, Rehoboth Madison	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Madison, Shalom Christian Assembly	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Madison, Sovereign Joy Baptist	\$3,553.90	\$327.00	\$0.00
Platteville, Rolling Hills	\$2,840.28	\$0.00	\$0.00
Reedsburg, Trinity Baptist	\$8,625.00	\$14,349.69	\$0.00
Sparta, Gospel Baptist Church	\$1,586.03	\$825.50	\$0.00
Sun Prairie, Christ Fellowship	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Sun Prairie, Transformation	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Sun Prairie, United Hmong	\$450.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Waterloo, Centro Biblico La Roca	\$0.00	\$50.00	\$110.00
Waterloo, Cornerstone Church	\$600.00	\$1,217.00	\$0.00
WI Dells, Rock of Hope	\$1,200.00	\$802.50	\$700.00
WI Rapids, Church at Wazeecha	\$2,069.00	\$0.00	\$685.00
WI Rapids, First Baptist Church	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$200.00
SWBA TOTAL	\$67,276.06	\$34,051.69	\$5,945.75

LAKELAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION	CP ¹	LMCO ²	AAEO ³
Bassett, Westosha Baptist	\$708.00	\$1,125.00	\$550.00
Brown Deer, Brown Deer Baptist	\$0.00	\$1,200.00	\$2,000.00
Franklin, Emmaus Fellowship	\$600.00	\$0.00	\$25.00
Kenosha, Fellowship Baptist	\$8,907.50	\$8,613.00	\$5,936.25
Kenosha, Missio Dei Fellowship	\$5,540.00	\$14,980.00	\$15,221.00
Kenosha, Parkside Baptist	\$3,091.69	\$1,095.00	\$2,216.00
Mequon, Westlake Church	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Ephesians Baptist	\$1,800.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Family of Christ	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Iglesia Bautista Nueva	\$140.20	\$0.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Korean Baptist	\$900.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Layton Avenue	\$5,204.87	\$4,797.00	\$1,255.00
Milwaukee, Mercy Memorial	\$650.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Milwaukee Arabic	\$78.86	\$0.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Monumental Baptist	\$495.00	\$495.00	\$955.00
Milwaukee, Mt Horeb Baptist	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Mt Pilgrim Miss.	\$600.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, UFlourish Church	\$1,754.09	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mount Pleasant, Immanuel	\$5,930.69	\$955.00	\$1,685.00
Pewaukee, Crossroads Church	\$2,162.70	\$0.00	\$0.00
Pleasant Prairie, Pleasant Prairie	\$4,701.00	\$2,017.00	\$1,523.00
Racine, Hope Community Church	\$765.88	\$1,381.00	\$2,213.00
Wauwatosa, Redemption Church	\$625.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
LBA TOTAL	\$45,155.48	\$36,658.00	\$33,579.25

SOUTHERN MN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Austin, Primera Iglesia Bautista	\$557.90	\$0.00	\$0.00
Austin, Austin Baptist Church	\$1,916.90	\$100.00	\$517.00
Chester, Chester Woods Community	\$535.00	\$1,125.00	\$625.00
Eyota, Hmong Baptist Church	\$1,753.20	\$682.44	\$619.00
Mankato, Hope Baptist Church	\$0.00	\$756.99	\$0.00
Marshall, Radiant Life Church	\$1,141.56	\$1,210.00	\$0.00
Red Wing, Hiawatha Valley Baptist	\$4,407.10	\$3,110.00	\$850.20
Rochester, Emmanuel Baptist	\$10,400.45	\$3,093.00	\$2,647.00
Rochester, Redemption City	\$6,660.23	\$0.00	\$0.00
Sartell, Park Fellowship	\$2,206.44	\$0.00	\$0.00
Viola, Viola Bible Church	\$1,541.78	\$2,000.00	\$1,010.00
Waseca, Faith Baptist Church	\$0.00	\$375.00	\$0.00
Willmar, Grace Baptist Church	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Winona, Cornerstone Community	\$1,767.25	\$2,115.00	\$0.00
SMNBA TOTAL	\$32,937.81	\$14,567.43	\$6,268.20

FUNDING

continued from page four

materials and even training expenses to the national steering committee for reimbursement. This could very well cover 80 percent or more of MWBC DR's needs. We hope to have the information on the MWBC DR website soon.

In addition, there are many discounts available for church and ministry uses. Just one is a 20 percent discount for paint from Home Depot.

Operationally, we have

stood down from two alerts southeast. Both shower units are scheduled for use this summer for missions efforts in Rochester, Minn., Wisconsin Dells, Wis., and Racine, Wis. This is a great way to both train our volunteers and make good use of these units. Thanks for all your prayers and support!

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

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Mission Gifts from the Churches

TWIN CITIES METRO BAPTIST ASSN.	CP ¹	LMCO ²	AAEO ³	NORTHWOODS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION	CP ¹	LMCO ²	AAEO ³
Amery, Journey Church	\$5,000.00	\$3,020.00	\$2,000.00	Bemidji, Ridgewood Baptist	\$684.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Bloomington, MN Kangnam Korean	\$800.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	Cambridge, Cross Pointe Church	\$1,500.00	\$2,204.00	\$1,458.00
Bloomington, Southtown Baptist	\$11,127.40	\$5,238.00	\$2,560.00	Crookston, Prairie Community	\$2,789.89	\$92.80	\$94.81
Bloomington, True Light Chinese	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ely, Berean Baptist	\$280.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Brooklyn Park, Ebenezer Community	\$1,600.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Grand Rapids, Calvary Pines	\$1,421.00	\$50.00	\$180.00
Brooklyn Park, North Center Baptist	\$5,053.07	\$195.00	\$150.00	Hill City, Hill City Baptist Church	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Burnsville, Berean Baptist Church	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Pequot Lakes, Eagles Nest	\$583.94	\$0.00	\$0.00
Burnsville, Crystal Lake Road	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Rice Lake, Hope Baptist Church	\$2,535.00	\$1,300.00	\$2,075.00
Fridley, Good News Hmong	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Roseau, Immanuel Baptist	\$1,520.28	\$210.00	\$0.00
Maple Grove, Northwood Community	\$833.35	\$0.00	\$0.00	Thief River Falls, Cornerstone	\$720.46	\$248.00	\$0.00
Maple Grove, Unlock Church	\$600.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Wadena, Grace Connection	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Minneapolis, All Peoples Church	\$3,240.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Warroad, Westside Baptist	\$3,257.90	\$250.00	\$0.00
Minneapolis, Gracepoint Minneapolis	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	NWBA TOTAL	\$16,042.47	\$4,354.80	\$3,807.81
Minneapolis, Hope of Nations	\$461.52	\$150.00	\$250.00				
Minneapolis, New Hope Baptist	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
Minneapolis, Shalom Community	\$865.52	\$0.00	\$0.00	OTHER			
Monticello, Grace Bible Church	\$2,700.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
New Hope, Westview Church	\$3,500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Eau Claire, Jacob's Well	\$4,450.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
New Prague, Calvary Church	\$13,093.05	\$0.00	\$0.00	Eau Claire, One in Christ Church	\$436.50	\$120.00	\$400.00
Oakdale, Eternal Life Hmong	\$840.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Grantsburg, Living Hope Church	\$0.00	\$50.00	\$50.00
Ramsey, Bethlehem Worship Center	\$100.00	\$125.00	\$325.00	OTHER TOTAL	\$4,886.50	\$170.00	\$450.00
Roseville, Roseville Baptist Church	\$7,000.00	\$2,801.30	\$1,545.96				
St. Louis Park, First Ukrainian Ev	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
St. Michael, Northwest Bible	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,002.00				
St. Paul, Cities Church	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
St. Paul, Followers Of Christ Hmong	\$3,239.55	\$1,379.02	\$740.00				
St. Paul, Iglesia Hispana Betel	\$750.00	\$0.00	\$650.00				
St. Paul, Salt City Church	\$14,650.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
St. Paul, Twin City Hmong	\$835.00	\$1,210.00	\$641.00				
Sunfish Lake, Bethel Baptist	\$3,600.00	\$1,008.00	\$3,089.00				
Sunfish Lake, Vietnamese Baptist	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
White Bear Lake, Emmaus Church	\$1,300.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
TCMBA TOTAL	\$96,188.46	\$15,626.32	\$15,952.96	MWBC TOTAL RECEIVED	\$337,229.86	\$122,566.74	\$88,812.66

¹Cooperative Program Receipts - January - June 2021

²Lottie Moon Christmas Offering Receipts - May 1, 2020 - April 30, 2021

³Annie Armstrong Easter Offering Receipts - July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

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

WEDDING

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her soon-to-be husband and take in her beauty and their joy. Somehow, though no one thought it possible, I enjoyed the moment without giving way to tears. I rejoiced in the goodness of God.

They declared their faith for all of their family and friends to know and understand their commitment to Christ and then to each other. Then we worshiped. Josh's dad led us in the song, "The Goodness of God." In that moment, Rachel and Josh weren't standing in front of a congregation; they were presenting themselves in worship to the Lord.

God had given them each other as an expression of His love and goodness.

He would love them through each other. They were thanking Him for His goodness to them. The thought made me smile with joy and peace. I rejoiced in the goodness of God.

Life is a mixture of joy and pain. Sarah and I have lived through many severe losses and great pain, but God was with us and brought us through. We have learned that "The Goodness of God" is sometimes accepted by faith and then validated in time. As the [song](#) by Jenn Johnson says:

And all my life You have

been faithful

And all my life You have been so, so good

With every breath that I am able

Oh, I'm gonna sing of the goodness of God

The message was the longest wedding sermon I've ever given—Rachel expected a real sermon; she would have it no other way. I opened with a story from the 2016 Farmer's Almanac about the importance of following directions (it was funny and fit Josh's passion for Costco): "Failure to follow instructions really can damage the doodad, and we surely don't want that! The same is true about following God's instructions for marriage."

riage."

Then I preached an eleven-point sermon from Genesis 1-2 and Ephesians 5. I'm not kidding! It ended with an illustration taken from research entitled, "Does the Flap of A Butterfly's Wings in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?"

"The answer is, theoretically, yes," I told them. "Very small changes can have dramatic effects. In marriage, you will make daily decisions that will determine your destiny as a couple. Daily, little, seemingly insignificant decisions to always respond with kindness will grow a crazy, good marriage."

As I taught God's

good plan for marriage I rejoiced in the goodness of God.

So today I sit at a computer screen reflecting on life—not just the beginning of a marriage, but the beginning of a new stage of life—for Josh and Rachel, and for Sarah and me. They are looking forward to what they will create together; I am looking back at what God created in us. From either perspective, I am still celebrating "The Goodness of God."

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

Back to the beginning

SBC

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were attending their first SBC annual meeting, and most of them came from churches that had not previously sent messengers. The 2019 Annual Meeting in Birmingham saw just 3,428 churches send messengers. The messengers in Nashville represented 5,570 churches, a 62.5 percent increase in the number of churches engaged.

While the messenger count was the highest since the 1995 meeting in Atlanta, the addition of 3,856 guests and 1,892 exhibitors meant the crowd officially numbered 21,474 – one of the largest gatherings in Nashville since before the COVID-19

pandemic.

“The Music City Center did an amazing job hosting our messengers and guests,” said Jeff Pearson, SBC Executive Committee CFO and convention manager, in a statement. “When we began conversations with the Music City Center, we discussed the possibility of 10,000 to 12,000 attendees. When the time for the annual meeting arrived, we had more than 20,000 in attendance.

“The Music City Center made the adjustments necessary to meet the needs of all who attended, including allowing food trucks to accommodate the growing demands. We are grateful to [MCC President/CEO] Charles Starks and his staff for their flexibility, hospi-

tal and professionalism as they hosted the largest SBC annual meeting since 1995.”

The 2019 meeting was the first in 20 years to feature messengers from every state, and this year’s meeting continued that trend. Five states even sent more than 1,000 messengers. Tennessee, the host state, led the way with 2,012 messengers, followed by Georgia (1,596), Alabama (1,151), Texas (1,125) and Kentucky (1,040). North Carolina (984) and Florida (981) came close to breaking the 1,000 mark as well.

Puerto Rico was represented by 27 messengers – one of its highest ever – and next year’s host state, California, saw 294 messengers come to Nashville – the

strongest showing for a non-South state other than Ohio (304).

As expected at an SBC annual meeting, messenger makeup was largely church staff and pastors. Forty-one percent of messengers serve their church as senior pastor. Another 15 percent were on church staff. Four percent of attendees were on staff with local associations and 3.2 percent were employed by national SBC entities.

Though nearly 40 percent of messengers attended for the first time, the age breakdown of messengers was typical of an SBC annual meeting. Thirty percent of messengers were over the age of 60, while 24 percent were under the age of 40. Forty-five percent

of messengers were between the ages of 40 and 60.

Even with the large crowds from all over the country, messenger registration was as smooth as ever.

“Even when the registration line went outside the door and down the hallway, I was told the wait was still only 30 minutes,” said SBC Registration Secretary Don Currence. “Most messengers said their wait was more like 10-15 minutes. The registration team had a great attitude and never complained about what task they were assigned or the lack of breaks especially on Sunday and Monday. They all came with a servant heart and it showed in Nashville.”

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PRESIDENTS

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you will talk with Him in prayer, and I believe you’re going to talk about Him to other people. What good is a prayerless pastor, denomination, seminary or church?

“I have heard it said all of us is better than any of us, and when we work together there is a spiritual synergy that compels us.”

Hunt, senior vice president of evangelism and leadership with the North American Mission Board, agreed evangelism “is still the greatest need in the Southern Baptist Convention.” Hunt, who was president of the SBC from 2008-2010, said missions is what Southern Baptists have

been great at throughout their history, and it is worth sticking together for.

“No one is planting more Gospel-centered churches than Southern Baptists, no one has ever in the history of humanity sent more supported missionaries than the IMB,” Hunt said. “We have the largest seminaries in the world. There has never been a denomination in the history of North America that has done more to save civilization than the Southern Baptist Convention.

“We’ve got so much more that we agree on than these few things that we need to get right. Anybody can quit, but it takes a real man of God to endure and be able to come together with others.”

Merritt, who also served as chairman of the 2021 Committee on Resolutions, said concerns over the SBC are sometimes misplaced.

“I’ve been reading about some people in the SBC saying we need to drain the swamp,” Merritt said. “We don’t need to drain the swamp, we need to fill the tub with evangelism, the Gospel, soul-winning and kindness.”

Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, who served as SBC president from 2012-14, closed the panel with a call aimed at younger Southern Baptists.

“Are we a perfect convention? No we’re not, but I believe that we’re doing all that we can to reach the generation according to the Word of God to share the Good News,”

Luter said. “... This convention has proven this through the years. We’ve got to continue keeping the main thing the main thing.

“If you make the main thing biblical authority, standing on the Word of God, loving people and reaching the lost, then this is the convention for you,” he said. “I’m in it, and I hope you’re in it, too.”

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Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist

NASHVILLE

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“liberal” is a relative term, but it is also very loaded. In the SBC, in my lifetime, we’ve had professors teaching in our schools who denied the deity of Christ and the truth of Scripture. That is a fair definition of “liberal.” Ed Litton is not a liberal. He is an inerrantist, a complementarian and an evangelistic pastor. Yes, he has a different view of some convention issues than many of us, but his is an arguably biblical viewpoint. I can’t imagine how it can be helpful to throw that term around as if the SBC is over. It’s not. More on that later.

The SBC has been saved from Philistines.

Again, this is unhelpful rhetoric that tempts us all when we win a vote. Several votes were very close, usually indicating a difference in two reasonable ideas, and most of us lost one or two. Those votes we lost were not the end of the world; neither were the ones we won the answer we’ve all been waiting for. In a year when it’s common to speak about unity, I find it unbecoming to speak of half of our fellow conservative, inerrantist, mission-loving brothers and sisters as the problem we came here to solve. Maybe we’ve all done it, but that doesn’t make it right. We’re not Democrats and Republicans for those two days each

year.

The convention wavered in its opposition to abortion.

In an unusual event, a resolution was brought from the floor and placed on the agenda. You can read the details here in the July TEXAN, but the debate highlights a divide concerning strategy among those passionate to see the horror of abortion ended. Those who did not favor the “abortion abolitionist” resolution were not guilty of compromise with the abortion industry. The debate was over a strategy that has seriously curtailed the number of abortions over the past 40 years. One pro-life group wanted us to abandon the strategy of making abortion rarer by insisting we go “all or nothing”—making all abortions illegal becoming our only strategy. A small wording edit gave us a strong but confused pro-life resolution that allows us to continue to work alongside other pro-life Christians in the fight to end abortion.

The convention was contentious.

In a sense it was—people contended strongly for more than one way of accomplishing agreed-upon goals. One article referred to a “vicious” debate going on between Southern Baptists. It wasn’t that. If by “contentious” you mean that we were ugly to one another, that was rare and not encouraged. I heard booing a couple of times, but it

was quickly reproved. The hallways were crowded; the food lines were long; the convention center was very large and spread out so that everyone was a little stressed by the context. But the crowd was also polite and good humored. You will almost never see a sporting event of any size where the people are this nice. And we were discussing things far more important than a ball game. I am not ashamed of my brothers and sisters after spending too much time with them in Nashville.

Messengers came to do business.

I don’t know if you’ve heard this anywhere, but it’s true. It’s been a while since we had this much time devoted to business.

QUERY

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Jesus Christ.”

Emphasizing the second sentence, Greenway said, “Critical race theory as an academic, philosophical theory rejects that claim,” noting that a book on the sufficiency of Scripture by Southwestern Seminary faculty members will be published next year by the school’s Seminary Hill Press to help examine a key facet of Christian response to such theories.

“However, many of our African American brothers and sisters, when they hear critical race theory, what they hear and what they heard from us [as seminary presidents] was

The moderator and committee leaders bent over backward to allow folks time to talk, add items to the agenda, extend the time for discussion and amend anything they wanted to. These things plus an unusual number of candidates for elected office blew some of our agenda items out of the water. Albert Mohler, in his interview with the TEXAN last year, said that we have shortened the program so much that people don’t have time to hang out and eat together. I’m sympathetic with that point but was surprised this year to see that maybe we have shortened the program so much that we are not prepared for people to be active in convention business. It might be good to build into the program more

that we were denying the reality of structural or systemic racism,” he continued.

“And I want to say not only as president of Southwestern Seminary but as a pastor at heart ... it breaks my heart that anything that we could have done as a [Council of Seminary Presidents] could in any way hurt or alienate or estrange our African American brothers and sisters in Christ.

“I will say publicly: For any way in which I personally have hurt you, I apologize and I ask you to forgive me. That is not my heart, that is not our heart at Southwestern Seminary.”

Earlier in his report, Greenway had de-

time than we need for messengers’ participation and then let us out early for lunch if we don’t need the time.

A final note: The Southern Baptist Convention is more durable than one year’s business can permanently fix or break. I guess we’re a little like the U.S.—presidents and congresses come and go, never making as much impact as they threaten or promise. I’ve found it helpful to remember that when I’m in the minority. If the other guys are wrong, they won’t be as wrong as I fear. If I’m right, it won’t matter as much as I’d hoped. Perhaps you disagree, but that perspective helps me grant others the grace to outvote me from time to time.

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scribed Southwestern Seminary as “committed unreservedly, unswervingly to the inerrancy, infallibility, inspiration, authority, sufficiency, indestructibility, indescribability” of Scripture.

“Our confidence is in the Bible as the written Word of God. And it is the primary textbook in every classroom at Southwestern Seminary,” he said. “With confidence and conviction, you can be assured that your Cooperative Program dollars are going to invest in a theological education that echoes the heartbeat of our Southern Baptist Convention of churches.”

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Minnesota-Wisconsin
Baptist Convention

MWBC

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