

Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist

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Empower, Equip, Pastors/Wives Retreat this month

Rochester, Minn. – March offers three opportunities for Baptists across Minnesota and Wisconsin to gather for Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention events.

Both the Empower evangelism conference and the Equip children's ministry conference will be Mar. 11-12 at Southtown Baptist Church

in Bloomington, Minn. These training, inspiration and motivation events are open to all.

Pastors and their wives will have an additional chance to get together at the annual Pastors and Wives Retreat Mar. 31 through Apr. 2 at Green Lakes (Wis.) Conference Center. This event is usually in February but was postponed this

year because of COVID concerns. The delay brought an additional surprise: a generous gift enabled MWBC to offer the retreat free to all pastoral staff (rather than just senior pastors and their wives as originally announced). [Click here to register.](#)

Keynote speaker for Empower will be Mark Clifton, senior director of

replanting and rural strategy for the North American Mission Board. The event offers numerous breakout sessions for targeted training.

Chuck Peters, director of Lifeway Kids will be keynote speaker at the Equip conference, which is designed for those who lead, teach and work in all areas of ministry to children.

Valley Appleton dedicates new building

Appleton, Wis. – Valley Baptist Church of Appleton, Wis., will dedicate their new 500-seat worship center at 10 a.m., Sunday Mar. 13.

A fellowship meal and tours of the 16,046-square-foot two-story building will follow the service. The upper floor includes the worship center and welcome center. The basement houses 11 new classrooms and a commons area for youth and adults.

The congregation first met in the new facility on Christmas Eve and since then has had two Sunday morning services each week, but will have only one service on the dedication day.

The total cost of the project— including the garage, landscaping, parking lot, and the



Valley Baptist Church of Appleton, Wis., gathers for the first time in their new worship center to celebrate Christmas Eve 2021.

just-begun remodeling — is estimated at \$3.1 million.

The decision to build came as the church saw all their classrooms occupied and their 230 seats in worship at near capacity in both services, said Charles Dunning, church member who serves as volunteer construction manager on the project. To reach people and grow, more space was needed. The church now expects to see in-

creased worship attendance and more people of all ages involved in Sunday Bible study.

"The new building is attracting a lot of interest in the community and we are very thankful to have many visitors," he said.

Construction began in September 2019 with excavation of the basement, pouring the basement walls, and installing the steel framing and concrete planks for the upper floor.

The church had hoped to finish the project during 2020, but they were counting on assistance from Builders for Christ (BFC) volunteer teams that were delayed from coming until last year because of the COVID pandemic. The first teams arrived May 22, 2021 and construction was virtually completed seven months later.

"Without Builders

See **DEDICATE** page 6

Litton salutes Midwest leaders at biennial summit

By Eric Reed
Illinois Baptist

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP) – As nearly 1,000 church leaders from the Midwest convened in Illinois, Southern Baptist Convention President Ed Litton saluted organizers and those in attendance for the unique regional event.

“You’re a testimony to the nation,” Litton said. “If all our regions would be so united together to perfect our skills and each other, that would be amazing.”

The Midwest Leadership Summit, which meets every two years, brings together church leaders from 12 states and nine Baptist conventions.

The state convention partners are Dakota Baptist Convention, Illinois Baptist State

Association, State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, Baptist Convention of Iowa, Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, Baptist State Convention of Michigan, Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention, Missouri Baptist Convention, and the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio.

The Midwest Leadership Summit began as the North Central States Rally as part of a church planting movement in the 1950s to address the unique ministry challenges faced by churches outside the South. “God is at work in the Midwest,” said Jeremy Westbrook, recently elected executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, who emceed the large group sessions. “That’s

one of the blessings of the summit: we get to talk about what God is doing in our churches.”

About 1,000 leaders registered, but the numbers dropped slightly as COVID cases rose. Those attending chose six breakouts from among 70 scheduled, in addition to three plenary worship sessions, prayer times and missions focus.

Unity was an underlying theme in Litton’s brief comments.

“My hope is for Southern Baptists to discover the power of crying out to God,” he said. “Even with ‘our stains’— past stains and abuse – God is moving through Southern Baptists to address these stains. Let’s make sure first to deal with the source of the stain.”

Litton was one of a



Ed Litton, current president of the Southern Baptist Convention, addresses attendees at the Midwest Leadership Summit.

variety of representatives of SBC entities who addressed the Jan. 18-20 summit. Each plenary session also featured a practitioner or planter from the region. Kirk Kirkland, planter and pastor of Revive City Church in Cincinnati, told of ministry among homeless and addicted people—and seeing God at work.

“Yes, ministry in the

Midwest can be hard. Ministry in the city, ministry in the pandemic. We have moved our location 11 times. . . . But it’s really hard when you start getting job offers,” Kirkland told the crowd that included many pastors.

“The gospel is able to break up the hardest of soils,” he said. “God can give you the grace of grit.”

ANNIE ARMSTRONG
EASTER OFFERING
FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

Gerardo Tony Antivero
Christopher Asmus
Jose Baker
Jesse Beernink
Don Bennett
Kevin Binkley
Tom Boyer
Kevin Chen
Sam Choi
Danny D'Aquisto
Grayson Gilbert
Jacob Hatfield

Brian Kite
Peter Ko
Jaehyu Lee
Christian Malone
Jose Marco
Jairo Martinez
Maxo Maceno
Matt Miller
Mark Millman
Greg Mott
Philip Nache
Dan Nichols

Ugorji Onwuka
Victor Ordenez
Kurt Owens
Jonathan Parnell
Paul Reichman
Johnny Russell
Issa Safadi
Mike Schumann
Tom Stark
Jake Tonak
Joshua Whetstine
Joseph Zayas

Pray for Your MWBC Missionaries

UNITED

Trust God and pray for Ukraine

The Motherland Monument stands 203 feet tall and weighs more than 560 tons.

It is part of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine and is meant to memorialize the heroes of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) after World War II.

For decades it has been an object of con-

tention. Some Ukrainians have wanted the statue removed because it glorifies the Soviet Union and its Russian origins. They no longer wish to be identified with Russia; they desire to be a part of Western

Europe.

Today, this monument looks like an early invader or saboteur standing ready to welcome the Russian invaders.

What was built to memorialize a horrible war now points to a prophetic reversal: victory for a Russian invader.

Please pray for the people of Ukraine and pray for the protection of other bordering nations. Ukraine's defense is hopeless against the powerful military they face.

I have often asked myself how one leader can lead an entire nation to fulfill his evil intentions. How could an Adolph Hitler lead a modern nation to kill 12 million people in concentration camps



The Motherland Monument in Ukraine.

and invade dozens of countries resulting in at least 60 million deaths?

These are days when modern people no longer believe in evil nor do they believe there is

a God who is in control and who will ultimately bring justice. We have passed the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 wake-

See **UKRAINE** page 7

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.

- A digital only publication, the PDF emailed free to all who subscribe and posted on MWBC's website and Facebook page.

- Formatted for letter size paper for those who want to print a copy.

Leo Endel
Executive Director
endel@mwbc.org
519 16th St. SE
Rochester, MN
55904

David Williams
Editor
davidwilliams@compuserve.com
P.O. Box 628
Liberty, TX 77575

Saying goodbye to Buddy

Some of you have been following my reflections about our dog, Buddy, for the last 13 years. We adopted Buddy one year before I started writing these weekly columns in 2009. Thirteen

years is a long time to write a column every week.

It is a much longer time in a dog's life. Buddy was a young dog when he found us, full of energy and full of confidence. He thought he could leap any barrier and outrun any rabbit. Of course, he could do neither. But that is one of the things that makes corgis so loveable.

They do not know their limits, and don't care. They will try the impossible.

Over the years Buddy has taught me many things. He has taught me patience by being patient, perseverance by never giving up. He

taught me the value of friendship and trust by his desire to be with me on walks or ride in my truck, going wherever I go without question or complaint. He has taught me to greet every day with joy and every moment without regret. And he has taught me much more. I have tried to capture some of it in my writing. Along the way, I wrote Buddy's story in a children's

book, *Buddy the Floppy Ear Corgi*.

We knew he was aging. Our vet said he is in his mid-nineties, in human terms. Our two-mile walks became a thing of the past. He slept a lot. He fell down the stairs, twice; so, we stopped doing stairs. He could no longer leap into my truck as he did in days gone by. He suffered from degenerative myelopathy, a genetic disease similar to ALS in humans and common to Pembroke corgis. He struggled to his feet and did the best he could. We tried to keep him comfortable and continued to love him as he loved us. Earlier this year we laid Buddy down, gently and tenderly, with tears.

In the end, Buddy was teaching me another lesson, how to



Bill Tinsley and his dog Buddy.

face my own mortality and that of those I love. As he declined, Buddy would join me outside for my early morning devotions, even when the windchill dipped to -4. I focused on Psalm 90, a Psalm attributed to Moses:

"We have finished our years with a sigh. As for the days of our life, they contain 70 years, or if due to strength 80 years. . . So

See **GOODBYE** page 5

We don't do childcare!

It's not childcare! A friend told me about a time that, as a children's ministry leader, she was asked by her pastor to provide childcare during a special program at the church. She looked

him in the eye and said, "I don't do childcare!"

She explained that what her team does is ministry and discipleship for children and if he wanted childcare,

she would help him find babysitters to hire. But if he wanted a children's ministry night to correspond with the church program she would gladly put that together. While the pastor was

a little taken back at first, he quickly saw her heart and realized what she meant: children's ministry is not childcare.

According to Barna

research, 86 percent of Christians came to know Christ before the age of 15. As a church, what are we doing to reach children with the gospel of Christ? We can agree that it is primarily the responsibility of parents to be the spiritual leader of their children, but many don't know how or are unchurched themselves. We need to develop ways to reach children and their parents and then disciple them to be leaders. Christian parents desire to be equipped to disciple their children and we can make opportunities to come alongside, train,

support and encourage them.

The Equip conference is a way to train and equip your leaders to have a vibrant children's ministry. We will cover topics about reaching children and their families in your community, training in how to lead a child to Christ, the attributes and essentials of an unshakable Kids Ministry, and how Vacation Bible School can reach your community and disciple children. We will also talk about ministry in a hard world, and what is the one thing that makes a difference in

keeping young people in church.

We encourage you to register your children's leaders to attend the Equip Conference Mar. 11-12 at Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, Minn. They will enjoy two days of encouragement, training, fun and worship. [Click here to register.](#)

Penny Reedy is a member of Pleasant Hills Baptist Church, International Falls, Minn., and is the Kid Min Team Director for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.



Guest Column
Penny Reedy

Empower breakouts will help you 'Let Your Light Shine'

The breakout conferences at this year's Empower will help you let your light shine, offering you training in evangelism, discipleship, disaster relief, international missions, ministry to children, welcoming guests, and emotional health for families and church leaders.

The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention event will be Mar. 11-12 at Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, Minn.

Tony Lynn will teach attendees to elevate the good news of Jesus Christ through relationships. He will show us

how to share the good news of Christ in the context where every individual has the freedom to create, recreate, or crush their personal, customized spirituality.

Jack Bell will train participants in The

Next Steps, a follow-up tool for new believers and disciple-makers. The Next Steps was designed to be used in small groups, triad cohorts, and one-on-one mentoring relationships.

Disaster relief is providing the following trainings: Involving Southern Baptists in Disaster Relief (required of all DR volunteers), chaplaincy training,

flood recovery unit training, and Chain Saw Unit Training. These training sessions will follow a different schedule than the rest of Empower due to their required durations.

Thai and Ming Her were commissioned as a missionary couple with the International Mission Board in 2009. They engage and connect unreached people groups in Asia. Thai and Ming will have three sessions to share their heart for missions with attendees.

The MWBC Kid Min Team is offering breakouts to Empower attendees as part of the Equip conference. The team will address helping kids stay connected to their faith and church, essentials of Kids Ministry, leading a child to

Christ, and a preview of the 2022 Vacation Bible School theme: Spark Studios.

Tate Cockrell will help attendees be refreshed to serve in the face of the pandemic, politics, economics, and personal crises that can prevent believers from making a difference in the world. In a separate session, Tate will teach participants the five principles of emotionally healthy leadership.

Three breakout sessions will be offered one time only. Ward Utterback will help attendees create a welcoming experience to connect people in

the community with the church. Chris Allen will describe the many ministry training opportunities available to MWBC church leaders at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Scott Speight will help pastors become relentless in pursuit of their calling and ministry.

Empower is free to attend and paid for by MWBC church giving to the Cooperative Program. Please register at mwbc.org by March 8.

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



Leadership
Clint Calvert

mwbc.org

Disaster relief meets needs, has needs

January was an eventful month with the rebuild in Kentucky finishing up.

I traveled with Jeff Owen from Reedsburg to attend a Sphere training for international missions at the Kentucky Baptist Convention. It is always great to learn side by side with fellow servants in this time of great need.

In December, we had

been called to Kentucky to assist with the tornado response and to be there a month later for this

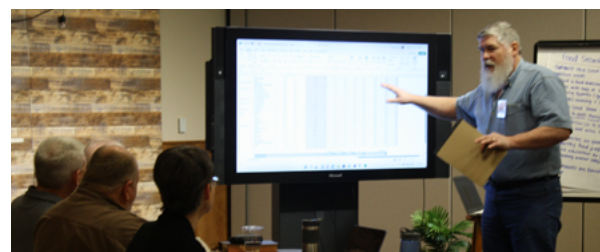
purpose was indeed special.

It does bring up a great need for Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention disaster relief. Our State

Missions Offering came in way below the mark last fall. That, combined with the pulling of funding by

the North American Mission Board, means our response well is dry. Please pray as churches and as individuals to consider including MWBC Disaster Relief in your budgets. We will continue to fund-raise throughout the year to make sure our equipment is serviced, supplied and ready.

I am excited to invite all to attend our first training in a year at Empower Mar. 11-12 at Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, Minn. We will have classes for DR 101, flood recovery, chap-



Jeff Owen presents a refugee response plan to a missionary panel. Owen is director of chaplains for Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention disaster relief. He is a member of Trinity Baptist Church in Reedsburg, Wis.

laincy and chainsaw recovery units. Go to mwbc.org and register for these classes as part of Empower 2022.

There is also a full DR training event coming to Jacob's Well, Eau Claire, Wis., Apr. 28-30. Go to mwbc.org/disaster-relief for

information and to sign up.

Thank you to all our partners for your support. — Ben and Kayla

Ben and Kayla Seamans are co-directors of disaster relief for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

Disaster Relief Ben Seamans



GOODBYE

continued from page three

teach us to number our days, that we may present to thee a heart of wisdom. . . . O satisfy us in the morning with thy loving kindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. . . . Let thy work appear to thy servants and thy majesty to their children, and let the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us. And

do confirm for us the work of our hands. Yes, confirm the work of our hands.”

Like every living thing, we shall all die. Like the grass of the fields and the animals of the forest, our bodies will return to dust.

But we humans are unique among all creation. God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul. Jesus promised, “I give

them eternal life and they will never perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:28-29).

A year ago, I wrote a column about animals in heaven. It makes sense that God, who created all life of every kind and de-

clared it good, would also include animal life in heaven. It also makes sense that He who takes note of a sparrow that falls in the forest would take note when a pet dies that has given fellowship and friendship to mankind.

We aren’t given much detail about heaven, other than the fact that we will be in His presence along with all who love Him and that

nothing that is essential to our happiness and joy will be lacking.

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

Mission Trip Scholarship

For students only. Write an essay on Luke 10:1-12. What does this passage of Scripture teach us about missions and evangelism?

First place winner
\$1500.00

Second place winner
\$1000.00

Additional awards
\$250.00 as funds are available

Scholarship deadline: May 1st

Apply at www.mwbc.org/sea

SEA Mission Trip to Thailand

July 26 - August 9



ASIAN PACIFIC RIM PEOPLES

IMB APAC1Day Missions Conference

Join us as we hear from missionaries on how to serve in the Asia Pacific Rim. Conference topics include student missions, IMB candidacy, the partner church, the missionary task, and others.

Saturday, May 14, 2022
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Location:
Emmanuel Baptist Church
2911 18th Ave NW
Rochester, MN 55901

Register at www.mwbc.org.
Lunch is provided.



DEDICATE

continued from page one

for Christ (BFC) and volunteer workers, clearly Valley could not have afforded the project any time soon,” Dunning said. Dunning has volunteered as a church facilities consultant with MWBC and for the past 28 years has led the volunteer mission team from Valley to help other churches with their projects.

Dunning said BFC leaders “provided valuable consultation and guidance that ensured the project would be financially viable. Then they led the enlistment and scheduling of the volunteer teams.”

The volunteer construction began May 22 with BFC and Valley volunteers framing the upper level walls. Then things began to move quickly.

“Major construction was completed eight weeks later on July 16 when 91 volunteers from South Carolina and a few other states completed the siding,

tongue-and-groove ceiling in the worship center, and soffits under the edges of the roof,” Dunning said. “A BFC team from Chesapeake, Va., built, delivered, and installed cabinets in August. Volunteers from Valley, a few local churches, and a few from out of state completed the finish work by Christmas. In total, about 600 volunteers participated in the project, each giving at least a week.”

Valley’s worship center is the 11th project in MWBC constructed by BFC volunteers. Dunning said the largest church building ever constructed by BFC was the 30,000-square-foot Jacob’s Well building in Eau Claire, Wis., in 2006. BFC has now built three projects for Jacob’s Well and three for Valley in Appleton.

Although BFC is a national organization, in 2019 a BFC-Midwest network of volunteer builders was established to concentrate on projects in the Upper



Top photo: Exterior view. Bottom photo: Welcome center.

Midwest, particularly projects of 2,000 to 10,000 square feet. The BFC “A Team” (which built the Valley facility) is still available to build larger projects in the area as they do throughout the nation.

MWBC churches interested in being part of

the BFC-Midwest network of building volunteers should contact Dunning at (920) 858-6338 or cedunning2@gmail.com. Churches needing BFC help with

building projects may also contact Dunning or complete an online [project application request](#).

Back to the beginning

Good news from the associations

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

NORTHWOODS

John Draper is the new interim pastor of First Baptist Wisconsin Rapids and he says “the pastor search team is working hard at establishing the right priorities as they prepare to refine their expectations and the job description for their next pastor.” He adds, “There’s excitement about recapturing our momentum in neighborhood visitation and spring outreach possibilities.”

Tom Johnston, long-time professor of evangelism at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, is helping Cornerstone Baptist Church in Thief River Falls during their transitional time while looking for a new pastor.

Mark Finnila is the new pastor of Mustard Tree Baptist Church, a new work in Duluth. He is retired from the Air Force and lives in the area.

You are cordially invited to the
Sixty-Second Annual

Pastors and Wives Retreat

March 31–April 2, 2022

Green Lake Conference Center
Green Lake, Wisconsin

Free to all MWBC-affiliated
Pastors and Wives

Contact MWBC at
jsundeen@mwbc.org for
registration link

SHOWING
FRIDAY NIGHT

BALANCING LIFE
AND MINISTRY

~
Roundtable
Discussions

UKRAINE

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up call where people saw evil in the modern world. The harsh unveiling of such evil has long faded away . . . until this week. Suddenly, the world seems back on the brink of a World War. And who knows what China plans to do next?

Evil has its day, but evil is never completely unrestrained. God keeps evil men on a short leash; in this world or the next, they will ultimately be held accountable. He will bring justice to the strongman whose dark heart leads to death and mayhem.

But even in the darkest moments, God promises to be with His people. He never leaves us or forsakes us. Even when He allows an Assyria (740 B.C.) or a Putin (2022 A.D.) to reveal evil, God appeals to us to return to Him. He is our Strong Tower and our Mighty Fortress.

Putin represents the old repressive Russia that brought atheism, decimation, and death to millions of people. His arrogance and authoritarianism are a perfect illustration of Jesus' words, "A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." Thank God, Jesus is the antithesis: "I have come so that you may have life and have it in abundance."

We must tether ourselves to the Sovereign God of the Bible and hold on to Him. No matter what it looks like today, the future always proves He is in control. Trust Him and pray for the people of Ukraine.

Perhaps God will save hundreds of thousands of people who are now calling out to Him.

Consider His Word:

"The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples," (Psa. 33:10).

"One day, every knee will bow and every

tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:11).

"A king's heart is like channeled water in the LORD's hand; He directs it wherever he chooses" (Prov. 21:1)

"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers conspire

together against the LORD and his Anointed one. . . . So now kings, be wise; receive instruction, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with reverential awe and rejoice with trembling. Pay homage to the Son or he will be angry and you will perish in your rebellion, for His anger may ignite at any moment. All who take refuge in him are happy"

(Psa. 2:1-12).

"Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns!'" (1 Chron. 16:31).

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

Back to the beginning

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MWBC events are in bold print.
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.

MARCH

6-12 Week of Prayer and mission Study for North American Missions/Annie Armstrong Easter Offering

11-12 Empower Conference, Southtown, Bloomington, Minn.

11-12 Equip Kids Ministry Conference, Southtown, Bloomington, Minn.

26 VBS Preview Event, City on a Hill Church, Madison, Wis.

31-Apr. 2 Pastors and Wives Retreat, Green Lake, Wis.

APRIL

15 Good Friday – **MWBC Office Closed**

22-23 MWBC Executive Board Meeting, Rochester, Minn.

29-30 Disaster Relief Training, Jacob's Well, Eau Claire, Wis.

30 MWBC Lottie Moon Offering Cutoff

MAY

14 IMB APAC1Day Missions Conference, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Rochester, Minn.

20 New Pastor Orientation, Rochester, Minn.

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

JUNE

12-13 Southern Baptist Convention, Anaheim, Cal.

30 MWBC Annie Armstrong Offering Cutoff

JULY

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

9-16 Hands of Hope, Rochester, Minn.

26-Aug. 9 Mission Trip to Thailand

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

1-30 Season of Prayer for State Missions

5 Labor Day – **MWBC Office Closed**

16-17 MWBC Executive Board, Rochester, Minn.

OCTOBER

TBD Called Out Youth Conference, Baraboo, Wis.

20 SEND Network Planters Gathering, Northwest Baptist Church, Wauwatosa, Wis.

21 Pastors Conference, Northwest Baptist Church, Wauwatosa, Wis.

21-22 MWBC Annual Meeting, Northwest Baptist Church, Wauwatosa, Wis.

24-25 Missouri Baptist Annual Meeting, St. Charles, Mo.

NOVEMBER

13-15 Baptist General Convention of Texas Annual Meeting, Waco, Texas

24-25 Thanksgiving Holiday – **MWBC Office Closed**

29-Dec. 8 Pastors' Holy Land Tour

DECEMBER

4-10 Week of Prayer and Mission Study for International Missions/Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

26-30 Christmas/New Year's Holiday – **MWBC Office Closed**

Churches still recovering from pandemic losses

By Aaron Earls

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Compared to the beginning of 2021, more U.S. Protestant churches are gathering in person and more churchgoers are filling the pews. The return to pre-pandemic attendance levels has stalled, however, in recent months.

The latest Lifeway Research study found, despite a new variant wave of COVID-19, 97% of U.S. Protestant churches met in person during January 2022, while 3% say they did not gather for in-person services.

The percentage of churches meeting in person is statistically unchanged from an August 2021 Lifeway Research study, when 98%

of churches physically gathered, but is up significantly from the 76% that met in January 2021.

“Almost all churches are able to meet in person for worship, though a few are struggling to re-open their doors,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. “Many more churches are working to restart all their important ministries and continuing to encourage people to resume in-person participation.”

More than 1 in 5 U.S. Protestant pastors (22%) say their church is close to their January 2020 attendance, with 10% saying they are at 90% to 100% of pre-pandemic levels and 12% reporting attendance is now higher

than before COVID-19. The same percentage of pastors (22%) reported crowds reaching at least 90% of their pre-pandemic attendance in August 2021. In January 2021, however, only 8% of churches had such levels.

Compared to January 2021, far fewer churches today have crowds of less than half of what they had in January 2020. At the beginning of last year, 31% of churches were at less than 50% of their pre-pandemic attendance levels, including 8% of churches that were below 30%. Now, 14% are below 50% attendance, and only 1% still say their congregation is less than 30% of what it was before COVID-19.

More than 8 in 10 churches have an attendance of at least half of what it was prior to the pandemic. The average U.S. Protestant church reports attendance at 74% of what it was prior to COVID-19, which means 1 in 4 pre-pandemic churchgoers are still missing from in-person worship services.

“People’s return to in-person worship services has stalled,” said McConnell. “There has been virtually no change in average attendance since August 2021. Some of this is the direct impact of COVID with people getting sick, needing to quarantine or being at high risk. But this also likely includes healthy individuals

choosing to not return.”

The smallest churches, those with attendance less than 50 before COVID-19, are the most likely to be back at pre-pandemic levels. More than a third of those small churches (37%) report their attendance is at least 90% of what it was in January 2020, including 18% who say they have grown numerically during the pandemic.

Online transitions

Most churches shifted to some type of online video services during the height of the pandemic. Now, many are asking those watching online to participate in person.

In January 2022, more

See **LOSSES** page 10

SBC diversity has entered a new age, newly compiled data show

By Scott Barkley

NASHVILLE (BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention is growing in ethnic diversity, according to research findings available online at the Great Commission Relations and

Mobilization Ethnic Research Portal.

The tool was unveiled to state convention leaders last month at their annual meeting. Accessing the information is free upon registering with the site.

Spearheaded by the SBC GCRM team, the initiative is a shared data collaboration of the Southern Baptist Research Fellowship and all six SBC seminaries as well as the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission,

GuideStone Financial Resources, the North American Mission Board, the International Mission Board, Lifeway Christian Resources and the SBC Executive Committee. The project contains information from SBC

annuals going back 30 years and is the culmination of efforts going back more than a decade.

The data reveals trends showing sizeable increases 2000-

See **DIVERSITY** page 14

Southern Baptist college, seminary professors reiterate church’s role in baptism

By Tobin Perry

PITTSBURGH (BP) — Recent news has brought baptism back to the forefront of the national conversation.

Last month Andres Arango, a longtime Roman Catholic priest in Phoenix, resigned after it came to light that

he had used the wrong wording when performing baptisms. Instead of saying, “I baptize you” as Roman Catholic church law prescribes during a baptism, Arango would say, “We baptize you.” Soon after this was discovered, the local bishop announced that all the baptisms

from the priest’s 25-year ministry were invalid, potentially throwing out decades of marriages and ordinations that were based upon these baptisms.

Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted, the Phoenix bishop who issued the ruling in collaboration with the Vatican, noted

that the Catholic church believes that “it is not the community that baptizes a person, rather, it is Christ, and Him alone who presides at all of the sacraments, and so it is Christ Jesus who baptizes.”

Southern Baptists have historically seen the ordinance of bap-

tism differently. Malcolm Yarnell, a research professor of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas, notes the command to baptize in the Great Commission wasn’t just given to the apostles

See **BAPTISM** page 11

M-W Baptist editor celebrates 25 years

By Michael Smith
The Baptist Paper

Many Americans had to adjust to a new normal when they were forced to work from home at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. For David Williams, it was nothing new.

For 25 years he has served as the editor of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist newspaper — from Texas.

Williams' first stint with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention was from January-August 1994, when he served as state

paper editor and evangelism/stewardship director before returning to Texas to become pastor of First Baptist Church of Flower Mound. He left that position in 2014 to become director of missions for Trinity River Baptist Association in Southeast Texas, where he continues to serve.

On Jan. 1, 1997, Williams became editor of the M-W Baptist again, this time working remotely from Texas.

"When I left the Minnesota-Wisconsin state

See **CELEBRATE** page 13



David and Donna Kay Williams enjoy the sights of the Great Smoky Mountains on a recent trip home to their native East Tennessee.

"Most small state conventions struggle to find excellence in this area. David has for years committed himself to travel to Minnesota and Wisconsin for a minimum of two events a year to cover the news and maintain the relationships that have allowed him to be a part of what God is doing in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Our geography is immense and most of us see each other even more rarely than we see David. He's worked hard to be one of us and to serve among us.

"David is the consummate professional. His mind for detail and understanding is impressive. In issue after issue, he has cohesively told the story of Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptists and joined us to the larger family of Southern Baptists. His hard work and tenure have helped to shape us and enhanced our mission. He has helped us stay connected and focused on the gospel. We could not be more grateful!

"He is my friend and a friend of Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptists."

Leo Endel, executive director,
Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention

"David is a consummate journalist with a pastor's heart. With the many technological changes over the past quarter of a century, David has consistently embraced new ways of telling the old, old story of Jesus.

"Through his two terms as president of the Association of State Baptist Publications in 2008 and 2020, David has encouraged and inspired his fellow editors to maintain high standards of professional journalism and to live lives worthy of their Christian calling."

Margaret Colson, executive director,
Association of State Baptist Publications

"Who David is as a person radiates in all David does, including his leadership and writings. For me and many others, David is a friend first of all. He is warm and inviting. He listens well and encourages no matter the circumstances. And when you work with David or read his writings, you find those same qualities. He encourages, builds up, unites. David reflects insightful understandings drawn from his careful study and reflection. David wears well as a friend or colleague. That means his influence has grown across the years and all his contributions to Baptists will never be known."

Bob Terry, editor emeritus
of The Alabama Baptist

"Though we'd met earlier through our common paths in denominational journalism, I became better acquainted with David Williams through a partnership relationship that the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist paper had established with the Western Recorder to publish their paper. Not only did I find David to be a very capable editor and talented writer, but he quickly became a genuine colleague and close friend through the years. Through his thoughtful and well-written articles, it was obvious that he had a deep love for Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptists and genuinely desired for their churches and the ministry of their state convention's pastors to grow stronger for the sake of the gospel."

Todd Deaton, managing editor,
Baptist Courier, South Carolina Baptist Convention

LOSSES

continued from page eight

than 9 in 10 U.S. Protestant pastors (94%) say their churches provided some type of video content for their congregations, including 84% who livestreamed their worship services and 10% who posted a video of the sermon later. Prior to the pandemic, Lifeway Research found 2 in 5 churches said they neither livestreamed their service nor posted the sermon online later.

As the pandemic progressed, more churches shifted to livestreaming services. In March 2020, around 2 in 3 pastors (65%) said they livestreamed services, and more than a quarter (27%) posted a sermon online later.

With more churches using online video in recent years, 45% of Americans said they watched a Christian church service online during the pandemic, including 15% who say they normally don't attend church, according to a 2021 Lifeway Research study.

Now, however, as almost all churches are holding in-person services again, many pastors say they want to see some online viewers transition to physical participation. Three in 5 pastors (60%) say they are exhorting online worshipers who are able to resume or begin to attend in person.

"Livestreaming has done a lot of good for churches, allowing members to hear weekly messages during the pandemic and allowing churches to reach new

people," said McConnell. "Many pastors are hoping and actively working to reduce the number of shut-in members who are physically able but aren't gathering in person with other believers."

Evangelical pastors (70%) are more likely than mainline pastors (49%) to say they're specifically encouraging those watching online to physically attend if they are able. Pastors of churches with 200 or more in attendance on Sunday (72%) are more likely than smaller churches to also say they're asking those able to transition from online to in person.

Pandemic impact

The pandemic continues to have a lasting impact on congregations, and most pastors say that it's been a negative one. Half (51%) say COVID-19 revealed weaknesses that already existed in their ministry, and 14% say the pandemic caused considerable damage to the church's ministry. Far fewer say COVID-19 has hardly had any ministry impact on the congregation (12%) or has launched the church to greater levels of ministry (17%).

Most congregations have faced COVID-19 directly. Almost 9 in 10 pastors (88%) say someone in their church has been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last six months. Around 1 in 5 congregations (21%) say a churchgoer has died from COVID-19.

Additionally, 88% of U.S. Protestant pastors

say attendees at their church have helped each other with tangible needs in the past six months. Almost 2 in 3 (63%) say churchgoers have recently met pandemic-related needs in the community. In a 2021 Lifeway Research study, most Americans (53%) said churches in their community have been helpful during the pandemic.

While only 12% of churches say they have grown numerically during the pandemic, most say they have connected with new people during the last six months. More than 4 in 5 pastors (83%) say new people who haven't attended their church in the past have recently attended or connected in person. Around 3 in 4 pastors (74%) say they've had new people attend or connect with their church online in the past six months. Still, a third of pastors (33%) say the considerable number of needs within their congregation has made it hard to focus on reaching their community.

Two in 5 pastors (40%) admit that it's hard to keep a positive tone among the leaders of the church. When asked directly about the attitude of the congregation, a quarter of pastors (24%) say the church is concerned about having fewer people and activities than before the pandemic, 27% say their congregation is moving forward but is exhausted trying to cover all the bases, and 44% say the congregation is excited about what God is doing today.

Ministry recovery

In addition to returning to in-person worship services, most U.S. Protestant pastors say their churches are also restarting small groups, student ministry and kids ministry.

More small groups are meeting now, and more are meeting in person compared to last January. On average, pastors now report 79% of their small group classes for adults that existed prior to the pandemic are now meeting, including 69% that are gathering in person. In January 2021, 36% of groups that existed before COVID-19 met in person, 25% connected online or by phone, 33% didn't meet and 6% no longer existed. Today, 13% of groups aren't meeting and 8% no longer exist.

Among churches that had student and kids ministry activities prior to the pandemic, most have restarted but have yet to see their attendance return to pre-pandemic levels. Churches also remain more hesitant to resume all activities for children compared to teenagers.

Almost 9 in 10 pastors who had student ministries prior to COVID-19 say they have resumed at least some activities in person (86%), including 70% who say all their activities are back to meeting in person.

The average pastor with at least some of their student ministry activities meeting in person says attendance for those is 65% of what it was prior to the pandemic. Most (58%) say attendance is below 90% of pre-COVID

levels, but 33% report attendance close to early 2020 levels. Another 10% say their student ministry has grown.

Like student ministry, close to 9 in 10 churches who had kids ministry activities before the pandemic say they have restarted at least some activities in person (86%). Churches are less likely, however, to say all their activities for children are back to gathering in person (64%). Almost a quarter of churches (22%) say they are only doing some of their kids' activities in person.

In the average U.S. Protestant church holding at least some of their kids ministry activities, 64% of kids are participating compared to pre-pandemic attendance. Three in 5 (60%) say attendance is below 90% of what it was before COVID-19. And again, like with student ministries, 32% report attendance close to early 2020 levels, and 8% say their kids ministry has grown.

"The typical church has made great progress this last year in resuming Bible studies for all ages," said McConnell. "Restarting Sunday schools and small groups have allowed the majority of pre-pandemic participants to re-engage in this vital connecting point."

Aaron Earls is a writer for Lifeway Christian Resources.

For more information, read the complete report and visit

[LifewayResearch.com](https://www.lifewayresearch.com).

Back to the beginning

BAPTISM

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or to ministers; it was given to the church.

“We understand that we, as a church, are baptizing because of the commandment of Jesus Christ,” Yarnell said. “For Roman Catholics, they believe the priest stands in the place of Christ. The priest acts as Christ. So they don’t want to speak of the local church being engaged in baptism. Baptists are just so different from that. We do believe that baptism is done by the church, as an act of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ in the Great Commission.”

Baptism for early Baptists

If someone knows anything about Baptists, they likely know this: Baptism is central to Baptist identity. In Barry Hankins and Thomas Kidd’s book *Baptists in America: A History*, they include baptism among the three features that mark Baptists throughout history.

“[Baptism] is really central [to the Baptist identity],” said Kidd, a professor of history at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. “It’s one of the few things that united all Baptist groups. I can’t imagine why anyone would consider themselves Baptist and not practice believer’s baptism. People naming themselves Baptists disagree on all kinds of theological and ecclesiastical issues, but one ritual that has always been there for Baptists and distinguished them from other

Protestants is the ritual of believer’s baptism.”

The distinctiveness of baptisms in the Baptist tradition goes all the way back to the decades after the Reformation and the first Baptists. Kidd notes that the name Baptist itself comes from Anabaptist, which means “re-baptize.” Early Baptists taught that those who were baptized as infants needed to be re-baptized as believing adults.

Kidd says this focus on believer’s baptism made Baptists unique among Christians of their era. The overwhelming practice of Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox was infant baptism, Kidd says. Other Protestants, he adds, largely saw baptism in the same way as circumcision in the Old Testament, bringing children into the covenant community of the church.

“The Baptists, starting in the late 1500s and early 1600s in England in particular, believe that kind of use of baptism as a sign of the covenant is confusing what baptism is in New Testament times,” Kidd said. “In Acts, it’s a sign of the internal transformation of regeneration and faith that only people who can understand what’s happening could possibly go through.”

Nathan Finn, a Baptist historian and the dean of faculty at North Greenville University in Tigerville, S.C., says this focus on believer’s baptism often made early Baptists take more time than we do to assess a baptismal candidate’s conversion. He calls

that the most significant change in how Baptists have done baptisms throughout history.

Mode of baptism has been a consistent Baptist distinctive throughout history, although Finn notes that the first generation of Baptists struggled to settle on immersion. While every generation of Baptists has consistently practiced believer’s baptism, many early Baptists still poured water over candidates instead of dipping new believers into the water. But for most of Baptist history, immersion has been the settled mode of baptism.

“We’re not going to baptize someone unless we think they’re a Christian,” Finn said. “We might be wrong about that, but we won’t baptize them if we don’t think they’re a Christian. And when we baptize them, it’s going to be in the water and we’re going to get all of them wet.”

What makes a baptism legitimate

Yarnell says the issue of the legitimacy of baptisms is different for Baptists who don’t hold to anything like canonical law.

“We don’t have any legal format we follow,” Yarnell said. “We follow more Christian principles that we find in Scripture. I wouldn’t want to present it in the same terms as Catholic or Lutheran or Anglican or even Reformed church law. We just don’t think in those terms.”

But, Yarnell says, without the Gospel – and both an internal and an external represen-

tation of it – a baptism isn’t proper.

“We believe that the baptism in water ought to happen alongside or after the baptism of the Holy Spirit,” Yarnell said. “To have the baptism of the Holy Spirit means to be born again, faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We want a real confession of faith. That’s the internal. What’s the external? It’s that external confession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that God is Father and Son and Holy Spirit. If you don’t have the external and the internal saying the same thing, you’ve got a problem.”

Finn notes that historically there have been disagreements by Baptists about baptism, but they’ve generally been united around three issues regarding legitimacy – the right mode (immersion), the right meaning (a symbol of the Gospel in a person’s life), and the right subject of baptism (a fully converted believer).

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 addresses all three topics, calling baptism “the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.”

Because Southern Baptists have historically tied baptism to both conversions and church membership, it has often been used as

an important metric in the evangelistic health of local churches, state Baptist conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. A decline in baptisms across the convention has been a common concern expressed in recent decades.

“We have to go preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ for us to see people baptized,” Yarnell said. “Baptism is something that happens after evangelism, after mission. So let’s put the priority on mission and on evangelism. Then let’s watch and see what God does through the number of baptisms.”

Kidd urges Southern Baptists to reflect upon the historic significance of baptism for Baptists – and to remember the price paid by those early Baptists for practicing it in what was a unique manner.

“I think that Baptists and Southern Baptists have probably lost some of the sense of how special and unusual the Baptist ritual of baptism was,” Kidd said. “For even centuries after the beginning of the new Baptist movement, in the early 1600s, Baptists went through a lot of persecution, because of how their baptism ritual was held in derision, even by a lot of other Protestants. I think that’s something to be respected and understood. A lot of Baptists suffered at least harassment and ridicule, if not imprisonment and fines for upholding what we consider to be the biblical view of baptism.”

Back to the beginning

Mission Gifts from the Churches

MINNESOTA WISCONSIN BAPTIST CONVENTION COOPERATIVE PROGRAM AND STATE MISSION OFFERING RECEIPTS

Cooperative Program Budget 2022 Year to Date	\$111,968.83
Cooperative Program Receipts 2022 Year to Date	\$104,170.70
Under Budget 2022 Year to Date	\$7,798.13
State Mission Offering 2021 Goal	\$100,000.00
State Mission Offering 2021 Receipts	\$41,842.36
Under State Mission Offering 2021 Goal	\$58,157.64

NAME	CP YTD	SMO 2021
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BAY LAKES BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Appleton, Hmong Baptist Mission	\$0.00	\$265.00
Appleton, Valley	\$14,319.15	\$6,622.00
Clintonville, First Baptist Church	\$279.00	\$350.00
Green Bay, Graceway Fellowship	\$1,762.87	\$0.00
Green Bay, Highland Crest Baptist	\$15,062.04	\$0.00
Manitowoc, New Beginnings	\$223.00	\$0.00
Neenah, Living Vine Church	\$50.00	\$0.00
Sheboygan, Mapledale Baptist	\$800.10	\$65.00
Tilleda, Bethany Baptist Church	\$356.80	\$0.00
Waupaca, Fellowship Baptist	\$233.28	\$0.00
BLBA TOTAL	\$33,086.24	\$7,302.00

TWIN CITIES METRO BAPTIST ASSN.

Bloomington, Southtown Baptist	\$2,261.00	\$1,906.00
Minneapolis, Gracepoint	\$300.00	\$0.00
Brooklyn Park, Ebenezer Community	\$600.00	\$0.00
Brooklyn Park, North Center	\$0.00	\$55.00
Spring Lake Park, Hmong Hope	\$0.00	\$500.00
Sunfish Lake, Bethel Baptist	\$1,200.00	\$100.00
St. Paul, Iglesia Hispana Betel	\$250.00	\$0.00
St. Paul, Twin City Hmong	\$360.00	\$790.00
Maple Grove, Northwood Community	\$166.67	\$0.00
Roseville, Roseville Baptist	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
St. Paul, Followers Of Christ Hmong	\$1,336.85	\$512.00
Coon Rapids, First Hmong Baptist	\$750.00	\$0.00
New Prague, Calvary Church	\$3,712.45	\$0.00
Roseville, Gospel Hmong	\$711.84	\$0.00
Maplewood, Eternal Life Hmong	\$168.00	\$0.00
Maple Grove, Unlock Church	\$100.00	\$0.00
Bloomington, MN Kangnam Korean	\$200.00	\$500.00
Sunfish Lake, Vietnamese Baptist	\$120.00	\$0.00
St. Paul, Salt City Church	\$3,500.00	\$0.00
Minneapolis, All Peoples Church	\$1,080.00	\$0.00
Ramsey, Bethlehem Worship Center	\$0.00	\$550.00
Minneapolis, Shalom Community	\$39.00	\$0.00
Monticello, Grace Bible Church	\$600.00	\$0.00
TCMBA Total	\$18,655.81	\$4,913.00

NAME	CP YTD	SMO 2021
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LAKELAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bassett, Westosha Baptist	\$320.00	\$ 345.00
Brown Deer, Brown Deer Baptist	\$0.00	\$1,100.00
Franklin, Emmaus Fellowship	\$600.00	\$0.00
Kenosha, Amistad Cristiana	\$300.00	\$0.00
Kenosha, Fellowship Baptist	\$0.00	\$3,550.00
Kenosha, Missio Dei Fellowship	\$909.00	\$0.00
Kenosha, Parkside Baptist	\$1,031.60	\$486.00
Mequon, Westlake Church	\$100.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Ephesians Baptist	\$900.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Family of Christ	\$100.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Layton Avenue	\$1,385.38	\$3,164.95
Milwaukee, Mercy Memorial	\$150.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Milwaukee Arabic	\$53.89	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Mt Horeb Baptist	\$0.00	\$200.00
Milwaukee, UFlourish Church	\$743.51	\$0.00
Mount Pleasant, I.C.A.R.E. Ministries	\$85.68	\$0.00
Mount Pleasant, Immanuel	\$1,108.21	\$1,820.00
Pewaukee, Crossroads Church	\$1,006.15	\$0.00
Pleasant Prairie, Pleasant Prairie	\$1,007.00	\$778.00
Racine, Hope Community Church	\$246.28	\$535.00
LBA TOTAL	\$10,046.70	\$11,978.95

SOUTHERN WI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Boscobel, Blue River Valley	\$226.98	\$0.00
Janesville, Casa de Oracion	\$0.00	\$55.00
Janesville, Resonate Church	\$1,195.31	\$0.00
La Crosse, Crossway Church	\$0.00	\$817.00
Madison, Campus Community	\$300.00	\$0.00
Madison, Doxa Church	\$9,232.32	\$0.00
Madison, East Madison Baptist	\$1,148.00	\$2,145.00
Madison, Gracepoint	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
Madison, Hope In Christ Assembly	\$457.83	\$0.00
Madison, Livingstone Baptist	\$266.00	\$200.00
Madison, Red Village	\$2,500.00	\$0.00
Platteville, Rolling Hills	\$3,979.06	\$0.00
Reedsburg, Trinity Baptist Church	\$2,900.00	\$0.00
Sparta, Gospel Baptist Church	\$806.81	\$1,447.80
Sun Prairie, Christ Fellowship	\$200.00	\$0.00
Sun Prairie, Reborn in Christ	\$185.91	\$0.00
Sun Prairie, Transformation	\$165.65	\$0.00
Sun Prairie, United Hmong	\$150.00	\$0.00
Verona, Memorial Baptist Church	\$250.00	\$0.00
Waterloo, Centro Biblico La Roca	\$0.00	\$30.00
WI Dells, Rock of Hope	\$400.00	\$0.00
WI Rapids, First Baptist Church	\$50.00	\$80.00
SWBA TOTAL	\$25,413.87	\$4,774.80

Minnesota-Wisconsin
Baptist



Inspiring a passion
among the MWBC family
to glorify Christ by
reaching the next generation,
mobilizing volunteers,
and developing leaders
to start and strengthen churches.

Mission Gifts from the Churches

NAME	CP YTD	SMO 2021
SOUTHERN MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION		
Austin, Austin Baptist Church	\$811.10	\$0.00
Mankato, Hope Baptist Church	\$663.80	\$0.00
Red Wing, Hiawatha Valley Baptis	\$1,520.90	\$100.00
Chester, Chester Woods Commu	\$168.00	\$0.00
Rochester, Emmanuel Baptist Ch	\$3,507.06	\$2,930.00
Eyota, Hmong Baptist Church	\$0.00	\$2,351.00
Viola, Viola Bible Church	\$230.00	\$735.00
Winona, Cornerstone Community	\$1,581.33	\$0.00
Marshall, Radiant Life Church	\$575.05	\$225.00
Willmar, Grace Baptist Church	\$25.00	\$0.00
Sartell, Park Fellowship	\$973.00	\$0.00
SMNBA Total	\$10,055.24	\$6,341.00

NORTHWOODS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bemidji, Ridgewood Baptist Churc	\$148.00	\$0.00
Cambridge, Cross Pointe Church	\$250.00	\$0.00
Crookston, Prairie Community Ch	\$1,635.02	\$57.61
Hill City, Hill City Baptist Church	\$200.00	\$0.00
Int'l Falls, Pleasant Hill	\$0.00	\$300.00
Grand Rapids, Calvary Pines Bapti	\$1,469.00	\$50.00
Rice Lake, Hope Baptist Church	\$795.00	\$2,025.00
Warroad, Westside Baptist	\$1,515.82	\$0.00
New York Mills, Grace Connection	\$50.00	\$0.00
NWBA Total	\$6,062.84	\$2,432.61

CELEBRATE

continued from page nine

convention I thought my opportunity to be part of that small group of state paper editors had forever ended,” Williams said. “What a joyful surprise it was when I was asked to resume working remotely from my home in Texas.”

The remote editorship was made possible due to a change he initiated during his first stint as M-W Baptist editor. They stopped using a local printer and mailing service to become a partnership edition of the Kentucky Western Recorder. The Western Recorder provided layout, printing and mailing services for them at a very competitive price. That partnership lasted more than 24 years.

Williams — who has a bachelors in journalism from the University of

Tennessee and a masters in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary — recalled a funny thing that happened early in his time as editor from Texas.

“I had a call from someone — I think it was from one of our entities — wanting to talk about placing an ad, and he was kind of confused that they put him in touch with me. So, after we talked for a while, and we talked about the ad prices and our policies, he said, ‘Well, now let me get this straight. This is the Minnesota-Wisconsin paper, but it’s published in Texas?’ I said, ‘Oh, no. We’re published in Kentucky.’”

When the independent Western Recorder in January 2019 was moved into the communications department of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and ceased publishing a print edition, that

NAME	CP YTD	SMO 2021
OTHER		
Eau Claire, Jacob's Well	\$850.00	\$0.00
Other	\$0.00	\$4,100.00
OTHER TOTAL	\$850.00	\$4,100.00
MWBC TOTAL RECEIVED	\$104,170.70	\$ 41,842.36

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

also meant the end of their partnership issues. The Arkansas Baptist News came to Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptists’ rescue and developed a partnership edition for them, but a year later that independent paper also was handed over to its state convention and ceased newspaper publication, leaving Minnesota-Wisconsin once again without a publisher.

It was at that time that MWBC executive director Leo Endel encouraged the movement of their state paper from a print edition to an email version. Being a lover of print media, Williams resisted but understood the necessity of the change.

He also saw some big advantages. The newspaper immediately moved from quarterly to every other month and reduced its turnaround from nearly a month to one week.

Williams said the highlight of his time as M-W Baptist editor has been the opportunity to get to know the great people of the MWBC.

“Donna Kay [Williams’ wife of 46 years] and I have built many lifelong relationships through the years, especially with state con-

vention staff and directors of missions, but also with pastors, church staff members and other church leaders,” he said.

The feeling is mutual among the people who have met the Williamses over the years.

“I’ve enjoyed getting to know David and Donna Kay through the years and appreciate their heart for ministry and their sweet spirit as individuals and as a couple,” said Jennifer Davis Rash, editor-in-chief of The Alabama Baptist and The Baptist Paper.

Williams is quick to credit the impact Donna Kay has had on his life and ministry.

“She’s everything to me. Without her, I couldn’t have done anything that I’ve done. It was because of her that I was driven as an agnostic to consider the Bible again and the claims of Christ and became a Christian,” he said. “She’s encouraged me and challenged me to be the man that I am.”

After 40 years in ministry, Williams has no plans to retire anytime soon.

“I enjoy the ministry to which the Lord has called me and intend to continue as long as He allows.”

Back to the beginning

DIVERSITY

continued from page eight

2010 in the number of congregations among Hispanics (53.1%), African Americans (52.2%), Other Ethnic (49.3%) and Asian Americans (37.5%) while Anglo congregations grew by only 3.7%. Growth continued over the next 10 years but at a slower pace.

Furthermore, membership of ethnic minority groups increased by 1 million from 1990-2019 while Anglo groups decreased by the same amount. In that time

span, 8 in 10 new SBC congregations were primarily made up of an ethnic minority.

'A timely and needed resource'

The research tool is open to anyone and was designed to benefit the local church, said Minh Ha Nguyen, who has served as manager for Global Research at the IMB for more than 22 years.

"The GCRM Ethnic Research Portal helps churches know their community well, pray for unreached people groups in their city and build Great Commission relationships

with other ethnic and language congregations in the SBC," he said. "It allows local churches to get to know other Southern Baptists who speak different languages and build relationships across the cultural boundaries."

Those tools can prove vital for churches, said Willie McLaurin. In December 2019, McLaurin was named vice president for Great Commission Relations and Mobilization at the SBC Executive Committee and most recently became the first African American to serve as

CEO of a Southern Baptist entity upon being named interim EC president.

"The online platform provides a simple and easily accessible resource that will assist us in identifying, enlisting and expanding the ethnic footprint in our mission field," McLaurin said. "The portal developed by Southern Baptist mission-minded researchers will have an immediate and valuable impact on reaching the nations and the neighborhoods."

The portal records that ethnic minority fellowships have a combined 11,287 congregations, making up nearly a quarter (22.3 percent) of the SBC. If they were separate state conventions:

- the African American fellowship would be the third largest, behind the Baptist General Convention of Texas and North Carolina
- the Hispanic convention would be fourth, behind the BGCT, North Carolina and Georgia
- the Asian American fellowship would be 10th, larger than Mississippi, South Carolina and Missouri.

The site includes interactive graphics that break down the research. Among the ten largest SBC associations, for instance, only Jacksonville has a majority of churches made up of one ethnic group (White Anglo). The other nine have no ethnicity exceeding 47 percent. A slider graphic also shows the change in the number

of ethnic minority congregations across the country since 1990.

"According to our research on Ethnic Diversity Index (EDI), we, as Southern Baptists, are more diverse than we think we really are," Nguyen said.

"In 1990, the EDI of SBC was 2.0 while the U.S. EDI was 5.4, with EDI=10 being the highest. In 2019, SBC EDI was 4.6 while the U.S. EDI was 7. In the 30-year span, SBC EDI gained 2.6 percentage points while the U.S. EDI gained 1.6 percentage points, a whole 1 point less than the SBC.

"This means that, while SBC is still less diverse than the U.S., it grows faster in diversity than the U.S."

'A long way to go'

While growth has occurred in diversity, the site also records the substantial decrease in baptisms among Southern Baptists over the last 20 years.

From 2000-2010, Hispanics were the only group to record an increase in baptisms at 12.5 percent. The SBC overall showed a 20.1 percent deficit in that time frame. According to the site, Southern Baptists reported a 62.8 percent drop in baptisms from 2010-2020, the highest decrease being among African American (82.6 percent) Native American (71.3 percent) and Hispanic (67.6 percent) congregations.

Back to the beginning



Hands of Hope is a MWBC mission project designed to help churches and church plants serve their communities by providing volunteers to take the gospel outside the walls of the church and into the community. This year's event will be held in Rochester, MN helping a new church plant with two Block Parties, service projects, and community evangelism and outreach. This year's event is \$70 per participant and includes housing/showers at Emmanuel Church, meals and snacks, plus a T-shirt. Adult sponsors, parents, youth and children's leaders are free. The event has the feel of being half mission trip and half family camp. Register by going to mwbc.org or by calling 507-282-3636 or emailing contact@mwbc.org.