

Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist

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Diversity shines brightly at MWBC annual meeting

By David Williams
Editor

Bloomington, Minn. – The ethnic, international and generational diversity of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention was on full display as messengers gathered Oct. 20-21 for their 40th annual meeting to hear reports, do business, and celebrate all that God is doing in

their midst.

Under the banner of “We Can Do More Together Than We Can Alone,” 70 messengers from 41 of the MWBC’s 195 churches were joined by 83 guests, bringing total attendance to 153 at Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, Minn.

See **MEETING** page 14



Leo Endel, rear, introduces newly elected officers of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention, left to right, president, Daniel Goba, pastor of Ebenezer Community Church in Bloomington, Minn.; first vice president, Chris Phillips, associate pastor of children and youth at Trinity Baptist Church in Reedsburg, Wis.; and second vice president, Joe Young, associate pastor of First Hmong Baptist Church in Coon Rapids, Minn.

Israel trip postponed

Rochester, Minn. – Because of the war, the Israel tour Leo Endel was scheduled to lead beginning next month has been postponed exactly one year and will now

depart on Dec. 27, 2024.

Enrollment for the trip will be reopened early next year so that others may sign up if the new dates work for them, Endel said.



The diversity of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention’s annual meeting was evident in the menu served at the Friday evening international dinner, featuring foods prepared by congregations that focus on various immigrant populations that live in the two states. Diners were encouraged to donate \$20 to mission efforts of the M-W Woman’s Missionary Union which provided the meal.



Tia Underbakke, left, of First Hmong Baptist Church in Coon Rapids, Minn., was re-elected president of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Woman’s Missionary Union at their annual meeting Oct. 20 at Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, Minn. Re-elected vice president was Angel Vang, right, also of First Hmong in Coon Rapids. Not pictured is Julie Yang, of Grace Point Church in Milwaukee, elected secretary. Elected as members at large were Pa Vang, First Hmong Baptist Church of Coon Rapids, Minn., and Jude Reinertson of Southtown Baptist Church, Bloomington, Minn.

MWBC Annual Meeting



Bible study during the annual meeting sessions focused on the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus found in John 17. Leading the studies were Philip Nache (left), pastor of Hope of Nations Fellowship Church in Bloomington, Minn.; Jeremiah Knoop (center), pastor of North Center Baptist Church in Brooklyn Park, Minn.; and Timothy Lor (right), pastor of Followers of Christ Hmong Baptist Church in St. Paul, Minn. Lor took note of the unity of the crowd, “across many different ethnicities, languages, and cultures . . . even across Packers and Vikings,” referring to the NFL teams of the two states.



Na Herr, MWBC intercultural catalyst/team facilitator, reports on this year’s mission trip to Thailand with 13 team members who taught English and shared their testimonies at an English camp. None of the team had teaching experience, he said. “If you graded us on how well we taught English it would probably be D+, but that wasn’t our real mission.” Their real mission was achieved as they saw 38 decisions for Christ. “Young people who go on mission trips are more likely to stay involved in the church and more likely to be called to ministry,” he said.



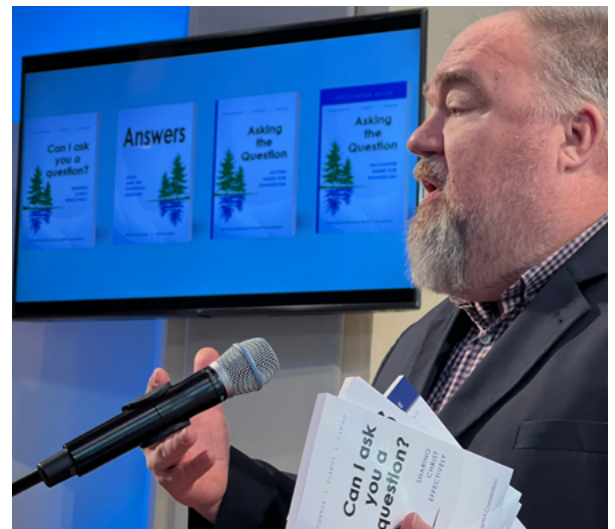
Preaching the convention sermon, Sam Choi, pastor of All People Church in Minneapolis, focuses on the convention theme, “We Can Do More Together Than We Can Alone.” Using Ecclesiastes 4:9 as his text, Choi acknowledged our tendency to turn to “alternatives to cooperating,” such as working alone, envying others, and valuing our own ministry more highly than the ministry of others. “Two people ultimately do more together than they could alone,” he said. “You can go faster alone, but you can’t go as far.”



Reporting on the MWBC disaster relief ministry which he directs with his wife Kayla, Ben Seamans tells of the opportunities that come when serving someone after they have endured a natural disaster, like the storm that hit New London, Minn., in July. “During an event like this, the walls come down,” he said. “The physical walls, the emotional walls, the religious walls. And we can come in and serve in the Name of Jesus.”



Music at the annual meeting sessions was provided by Foua Young (top left), worship director at First Hmong Baptist Church in Coon Rapids, Minn., as well as worship teams from Ebenezer Community Church in Bloomington, Minn. (top right), and Hope of Nations Fellowship Church in Bloomington (bottom).



Clint Calvert, MWBC church leadership catalyst, shows the “Can I Ask You a Question?” materials that will be featured during the Mar. 8-9, 2024, Empower, along with the new Creating a Culture of Evangelism kit produced by the North American Mission Board.

Good vs. evil

What is happening in Israel and in the Gaza Strip? What is happening across the United States as anger and hatred spill out in antisemitism? Did the world learn nothing from the Holocaust?



Perspectives

Leo Endel

ians feel, how is one to justify the unrestrained shootings, executions, beheadings, and even the slaughter of children and babies? The images are too horrible to even contemplate, but equally horrifying are those

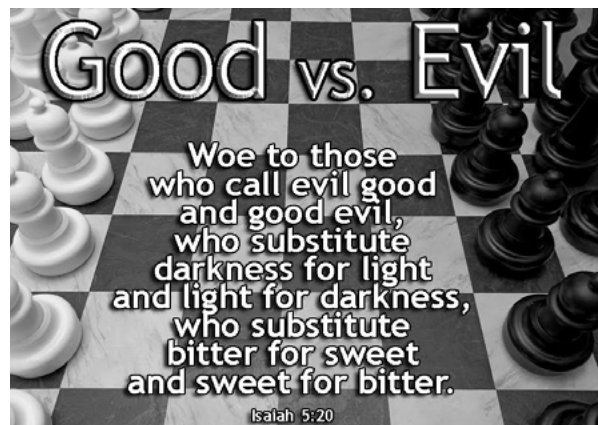
who defend such acts as if they are morally justifiable, morally equivalent to the perceived harm done to Palestinians.

Unfortunately, the shadow of evil is rising across the U.S. as well. Even some of our politicians and citizens believe the Palestinians have been so wronged

that they are justified in their attempted holocaust. Shocking are the demonstrations on college campuses and in major U.S. cities calling for death to Israel and death to the Jews.

If someone believes that you, born into an ethnic group or nationality, are an oppressor, they are free to do ANYTHING to anyone to punish you, to cancel you, even destroy you. They have lost their moral compass; they justify killing over a "microaggression" or without any cause at all. They distort reality; they equate disagreement with hatred; they want to destroy you.

Right and wrong are being turned upside down, and the four-



thousand-year-old Ten Commandments have been completely rejected. "Stealing is okay if you have been disadvantaged." "It is okay to lie if it helps you take advantage of someone who you perceive has an advantage over you." "Have sex with anyone you want, any time you want, any way you want. Adultery/immorality

isn't wrong; it's actually good." "Murder an unborn baby, so IT doesn't ruin your life."

The prophet Isaiah put it succinctly, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and

See **GOOD** page 13

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Children of the Kingdom

When we think about being religious, we conjure up different images.

Some imagine ascetic monks living in desert regions, emaciated and starving, bleary eyed and anti-social. Others picture nuns wearing habits and whispering prayers as they finger their rosaries. Still others imagine TV evangelists with slicked-back hair.

When Jesus wanted to forge an image in the minds of his followers,

he chose a child and stood him in their midst and said, "Unless you change and become as children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven," (Matt. 18:2-3). Why would he do this?

Jesus left the answer to that question up to us. We can all speculate about the lesson He wanted to teach by choosing a child. Here are a few characteristics that stand out to me when I think about children and the reason He chose a child



Reflections

Bill Tinsley

to illustrate the nature of Kingdom people.

Children live in the moment. They are not worried about the future. They are not burdened with guilt about the past. Watch children playing on a playground. They have little awareness of time. They wear no watches.

Children become friends fast. Most children have not learned to be hesitant and shy. They greet one another as if they have already met. "Want to play?" And the game is on.

Children laugh. I love listening to children on the school playground and in the park. Anywhere children

gather, the air is filled with laughter. It is their nature to laugh.

Children do not know prejudice. I'm not sure when we learn racial and cultural prejudice, but young children readily accept each other as equals regardless of skin color or clothing. If they notice a difference between them, they do not hesitate to ask about it. And, once the difference is recognized and addressed, they move on.

Children trust. With their father's extended arms and a little encouragement, they will fling their bodies into open

See **KINGDOM** page 14

MWBC partners provide effective evangelism resource

The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention has partnered with Preston and Kelly Condra of Sufficient Word Ministries to provide easy-to-use, practical evangelism resources.



Leadership
Clint Calvert

and facilitator manual for evangelism training (*Asking the Question*).

Offering simple, natural ways to start conversations inspires Christians to begin witnessing immediately.

Can I

Ask You a Question? is an evangelism handbook that solves the three main barriers that Christians report regarding evangelism: “I don’t know what to say,” “I can’t answer objections to the Gospel,” and “I do not want to offend.” *Can I Ask You a Question?* with its companion workbook provides clarity regarding what to say, confidence to address objections with biblical answers by using the Index of Objections, and caring ways to initiate natural, “no-pressure” evangelistic conversations.

istic conversations.

Answers (the book to give away) addresses the same objections to the gospel and uses the same Bible verses as *Can I Ask You a Question?* The latter coaches the believer to address the objection, while *Answers* is written for the unbeliever, new believer, person with questions, or those whose beliefs are unknown. The tone of *Answers* is: “You might not agree, but would you consider what the Bible says?” It can be given away as part of evangelism, and is also useful for establishing foundational Christian doctrine in new member classes, student groups, prison ministry, and more.

Asking the Question is a flexible six-week study guide for taking action in evangelism. Using uncomplicated, ordinary ways to start conversations and practical exercises to prepare, Christians can immediately begin to share the good news of Jesus Christ. When used with the companion book, *Can I Ask You a Question?*, the common barriers to evangelism are solved, providing a clear and caring way to evangelize confidently. *Asking the Question* can be adapted for seminar training or extended according to the group’s needs.

Asking the Question - Facilitator Guide is the leader’s edition of

Asking the Question. It is a coaching guide that contains all the material from *Asking the Question* plus preparatory and in-chapter aids for teaching and managing the class or group. It includes topics such as expecting spiritual opposition, standing firm on the Gospel, time management, assessment of understanding, dealing with disagreement within the group, and incorporating the handbook, *Can I Ask You a Question?*

To order any of these resources, click [here](#).

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

Support your missionaries

For the past few years I have been involved in coordinating the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offerings. I am proud to be a part of this effort that has brought

in \$203.7 million for international missions and \$68.7 million for North American missions in just the last year. The offerings have allowed the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board to support more than 3,500 international

missionaries around the world and 2,400 church planters and missionaries here at home.



Intercultural
Na Herr

I want to thank my volunteers who have assisted me during the mailouts. They

have patiently counted and sorted through thousands of envelopes and prayer guides over the years. Clerical work is mundane and uninteresting but has great gospel impact when it connects ministry needs with vital resources.

I encourage you and your church to consider

making a gift to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering this year. This is a simple way for your church to support thousands of missionaries serving in very difficult places. In the next couple of weeks, you will receive print resources in the mail to promote this offering. I also want to highlight the many excellent resources and videos available online that your church could use during worship or Bible study. These resources are available at www.imb.org/lottiemoon.

Na Herr is intercultural catalyst/team facilitator for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

100%
OF GIFTS GIVEN TO THE
LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING*
SUPPORTS MISSIONARY PRESENCE.

IMB.ORG/LOTTIEMOON

News from the churches that serve our young adults

I want to share with you some news I have heard recently from some of our churches that are doing a great job of serving young adults. Here is what they have told me.



Student Ministries

Bob Smith

lar attenders.

Red Village Church, Madison

Connection Sunday, September 10 was a huge success. Each student received information on how

to become involved in villages (small groups), men's events, women's events, Next steps classes, village kids, and ways to get involved at RVC. Students who were involved in overseas missions this past summer shared during our mission potluck.

Livingstone Baptist Church, Madison

By the grace of God eight new students had started point classes this fall season. Every Friday three to five college students are joining campus evangelism, too. God is good all the time!!

Rolling Hills Community Church, Platteville

We are providing new students with career assessments to assist them to better understand how God made them and how to best determine what God may be calling them to in the future. We will be studying R. C. Sproul's "Knowing Scripture." We are already looking to the Spring for our dodgeball outreach event. We continue to grow. Our weekly small group averages 25 with a high attendance of 34. We have first time attenders each week. We had one profession of faith and one baptism in the spring and are praying for more this year. We have a good group of incoming freshmen who have become regu-

Journey Church, Amery

We have split our young adult group into a men's and a women's group and we have had a surge in young adults coming to Journey. Some of the women's events include succulent planting day and painting day. And we are planning a holiday card crafting event. Four people have joined recently.

Roseville Baptist Church, Roseville

Austin Pavelka is the point person for Equipped, a recently launched ministry that involves a growing number of young adults. Our prayer and purpose is to have people come to know and grow in Jesus. The focus is on discipleship for those who are

involved and outreach to the community. We also have Wednesday and Sunday small groups, shuttle rides for students from area campuses, men's basketball, co-ed softball, monthly young adult events, quarterly service projects, and annual mission trips.

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



The young adult/college ministry of Livingstone Baptist Church in Madison, Wis., is constantly reaching new people.

Closing a chapter

I want to celebrate what feels like the closing of a chapter.

It's been seven years since I left my abuser.

Many of you have already taken the time to read my [blog post](#) about the sexual abuse I endured as a teenager. First of all, thank you. Like I wrote, a large part of my intentions in publishing so publicly was to reconcile: my past with my present, my old community with my new one, the pain and the joy that's emerged out of it. A huge weight has been lifted off my chest—there's nothing left to hide. Here I am.

This photo was taken about 10 years ago. 17-year-old me was still in the thick of so, so much. In just a couple of months she

would hear the gospel presented for the first time in a way that

would actually make her think about her own sin, and from there she would begin to fully surrender her life to Jesus—not to just be

a part of a people or to do great things, but instead because she knew she needed Him personally in every inch of her imperfect life.

It's miraculous. I'm sure people thought there was no hope for me to get out of such a bad situation—except for Jesus. And He came through by drawing me to Himself.

17-year-old me could barely imagine the possibilities of life ahead of her. 21-year-old me almost chose not to live. 27-year-old

me today rejoices in full freedom.

In every dark season past, God has been good to me. In every dark season ahead, I'll have so much of God's goodness to hold onto. The blood of Jesus that reconciled me to Himself is a sure promise—for good in life, and life for eternity. I could write forever about these things.

And I think I will. I want to be heard proclaiming Jesus. I want to be obedient to being salt and light. There are more people who need to know or be reminded that Jesus can save them from anything, change them for better in all the healing, and will never let them go. So use me, Lord in whatever chapters lay ahead.

Foua Young is worship director, First Hmong Baptist Church, Coon Rapids, Minn.



Guest Column

Foua Young

MWBC Annual Meeting



A total of 153 messengers and guests fill Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, Minn., for MWBC's 40th annual meeting.



As M-W WMU members distribute gifts to all pastors present, Tia Underbakke (right), president, tells the crowd, "If you don't remember anything else about WMU, remember this: 'How can I help you?' We are here to enhance what you are doing. Not to take over, but to enhance."



Mark Millman (right), director of missions/church planting catalyst for Southern Wisconsin Baptist Association, introduces at the annual meeting guests from Argentina and others who are working with Millman to provide a pipeline of pastors for new Hispanic churches in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Left to right are: David Brady, executive assistant, Word of Life Latin America; Jose Marco, church planter and mobilizer, Emmanuel Church in Madison, Wis.; Elijah Windle, practical student ministries director, Rio Grande Bible Institute in Edinburg, Texas; Claudio Quinteros, CeCa Bim Seminary in Argentina; Gerardo Latini, executive director for Word of Life Bible Institute in Argentina; and Sergio Martinez, executive director for Word of Life Latin America. Asked about the availability of Spanish speaking pastors, Jose Marco said, "We have some ready to go, some in the oven cooking."



Charles Dunning, president of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Foundation, reports that their assets under management have increased 18 percent in the past four years. During that same time period, he said, the M-W partnership with Free Will, a non-profit that enables individuals to write their own will online without charge, has resulted in \$2.8 million bequeathed to churches and other Baptist causes.



Jonathan Lemaster, youth pastor at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Rochester, Minn., and MWBC Hands of Hope director, reports on the successes of the 2023 event in Milwaukee at Monumental Baptist Church. The 2024 Hands of Hope will be June 17-22 somewhere in Minnesota, he said.



In his president's message, Daniel Goba tells messengers, "Your service is evidence of your love for Christ. Don't give up on serving." Goba is pastor of Ebenezer Community Church in Bloomington, Minn.

MWBC Annual Meeting



"Evangelism is a process, not an event," says Sony Tucker, former executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and now a liaison to state conventions for the North American Mission Board. A person coming to Christ involves many people, touches and steps along the way, he said, adding, "Never, never, never give up on anyone and always trust the power of the Holy Spirit and the gospel."



During the M-W WMU annual meeting, attendees do a craft activity, making two prayer bracelets — one for someone they will pray for and another one for themselves.



"We recognize that church planting in the Twin Cities and across Minnesota-Wisconsin is slow work," Jonathan Parnell tells messengers. "It's not like shooting fireworks. It's more like planting trees. It takes time." Pastor of Cities Church in Minneapolis and Twin Cities SEND missionary for the North American Mission Board, Parnell said that there are some things we can do, while other things are out of our hands. "We till the ground and sow the seed and water like crazy, but our hope is in God," he said.



Just before the annual meeting, Sarah Endel, wife of MWBC Executive Director Leo Endel, leads pastors' wives in a Bible study from the Book of Esther on "Such a Time As This."



Daniel Goba, MWBC president, presents a plaque to Wes Shemwell (right), who is retiring from service after completing 19 years as the convention's recording secretary.



MWBC Executive Director Leo Endel tells messengers there is hope for the future despite challenges facing churches today. "The church is not done, no matter what we see statistically," he said. "God is not dead. The church is not defeated. God's best is yet to come." An important part of our job now is to invest in the next generation so they can become leaders. "The future of the church depends on what you are doing with those eight-year-old boys and girls right now," he said.

SWBA sees growth through church planting, partnerships

NASHVILLE (BP) — Southern Wisconsin has seen God move over the past 18 years. In 2005, the Southern Wisconsin Baptist Association, headquartered in Madison, had 13 churches. Today it has 36, thanks to church planting and new affiliations.

Partnerships and trust were key ingredients in the associational resurgence. Director of Missions Mark Millman also serves as a church planting catalyst with the North

American Mission Board (NAMB), forging strong ties between the association and the Southern Baptist Convention. Partnerships with other associations across the nation yield prayer support, ministry volunteers and resources for Southern Wisconsin Baptists. Those partnerships include associations in Texas, Ohio and Georgia. As a result, lives are being changed in Wisconsin churches.

Millman thinks a resurgence of associ-

ations may be the key to spiritual renewal across the SBC. He notices the shift in attitude toward associations, and he has seen it pay dividends.

Associations are “biblical,” Millman said. “Two are better than one. A three-corded strand is not quickly broken. I’ve experienced it for 18 years” as an associational leader. “Even when I was a staff member for the 12 years I worked in churches, my go-to guy was always the as-

sociation guy. I always felt like he had the most perspective and the best voice in my life.”

SWBA illustrates a larger trend, according to Millman.

“I’m around enough people to know, and I feel like there’s an upward trend” among Southern Baptist associations, Millman said. “I really have seen associations thrive across the country.”

Associational leaders throughout the convention say a resurgence of associations has given local Baptist cooperation an increasingly visible and relevant role in SBC life.

Twenty years ago, the relevance of associations was not a given. Several associational leaders told Baptist Press they recall meetings where national SBC leaders predicted the demise of associations. Skepticism toward associations lingered into the 2010s, indicated by a 2017 study that found “nothing” was the most common answer when Baptist leaders were asked to describe the most exciting aspect of their local Baptist association.

Finances can be a challenge for associations as well. SBC-wide data on associations is difficult to come by, in part because not all state conventions ask about associational giving on the Annual Church Profile (ACP). But in Alabama, a state whose ACP does ask about associational giv-

ing, churches’ reported gifts to local Baptist associations have declined 29 percent over the past 20 years—from \$13.9 million in 2002 to \$9.9 million last year. Those figures likely do not include all gifts to associations, and a lower percentage of churches submitted their ACP in 2022 than in 2002. Still, the challenges for associations are evident.

“Off and on through the last 20 years or more, people have said there are three levels of cooperation in SBC life—association, state and national—and that at some point in the future there may not be three. There may only be two,” said Ray Gentry, president of the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders (SBCAL). “The two were going to be the state convention and the national.”

But the predictions of associations’ demise have not materialized. One encouraging sign is the growth of SBCAL, a professional cohort of associational mission strategists.

Today’s SBCAL membership is the largest at any time since the group’s inception in 1960. More than 570 associational leaders are members out of approximately 1,100 associations. They meet for an annual conference preceding each year’s SBC Annual Meeting. They also produce resources and webinars



Northwood Church in Maple Grove, Minn., dedicated their new building on Sept. 17.



These 13 new believers were baptized Oct. 8 by First Hmong Baptist Church of Coon Rapids, Minn. Kneeling in front are Pastors Tonger Vang, Sao Vang, Joseph Young, and Xai Lor.

GROWTH

continued from page six

and host ongoing ministry cohorts to help associational leaders refine their skills.

Gentry thinks he knows why associational cooperation is making a comeback. For one, God is using SBCAL resources “to really raise the bar of what is an effective associational leader.” A benchmark resource was the conference’s 2020 book, edited by Gentry, *The Baptist Association: Assisting Churches. Advancing the Gospel*. The book built on a 2018 study of associations’ work in SBC life, which identified 17 competencies of effective associational leaders.

“Many changes have taken place in associational missions in recent years,” said Steve Laughman, associational mission strategist for the Centennial Baptist Association in Thomas, Ga. “Associations and associational leaders who are not willing to change will find themselves hurting and ineffective. But those who have embraced what SBCAL has found to be the essentials—the 17 proficiencies of an effective associational leader—have adapted and are generally thriving because they are serving their churches well.”

Another factor in the comeback of associations is that they foster trust among Baptists in an era when it can be in short supply. Social media reflects differences over mission

strategies, SBC entity leadership, SBC presidential elections and how the Convention should respond to sexual abuse. Yet people on opposite sides of those issues find themselves talking and cooperating in local associations.

“Pastors in an association may have disagreements on national

convention issues,” Gentry said. “Yet they know each other and they love each other locally, so it really causes, in most cases, pastors and churches in the local association to work together well and to bridge those divides that seem to be on the national level.”

Bob Bumgarner, lead

missional strategist for First Coast Churches, the Baptist association in Jacksonville, Florida, agrees. The personal relationships in an association draw in churches and pastors, he said.

“In an environment of declining trust and skepticism about institutions,” Bumgarner said, “there really is

something magnetic about being able to pick up the phone and call someone who will answer the phone, know your name and situation and empathetically listen to you, and then practically offer assistance through the network.”

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.

NOVEMBER

23-24 Thanksgiving Holiday – **MWBC Office Closed**

DECEMBER

3-9 Week of Prayer and Mission Study for International Missions/Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

25-1/1 Christmas/New Year’s Holiday – **MWBC Office Closed**

JANUARY

23-25 Midwest Leadership Summit

FEBRUARY

1-3 **Pastors and Wives Retreat, Green Lake, Wis.**

MARCH

3-10 Week of Prayer for North American Missions/Annie Armstrong Easter Offering

7-9 **Empower Conference, Green Lake, Wis.**

29 Good Friday – **MWBC Office Closed**

APRIL

19-20 **MWBC Executive Board Meeting, Rochester, Minn.**

30 MWBC Lottie Moon Offering Cutoff

MAY

19 **New Pastor Orientation, Rochester, Minn.**

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

JUNE

9-12 Southern Baptist Convention, Indianapolis, Ind.

17-22 **Hands of Hope, location TBD**

30 MWBC Annie Armstrong Offering Cutoff

JULY

1-14 **SEA Mission Trip, Thailand**

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

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

1-30 **Season of Prayer for State Missions**

2 Labor Day – **MWBC Office Closed**

13-14 **MWBC Executive Board, Rochester, Minn.**

27-29 **Called Out Youth Conference, Barboo, Wis.**

OCTOBER

24 **Church Planters Gathering, Valley Baptist Church, Appleton, Wis.**

25 **Pastors Conference, Valley Baptist Church, Appleton, Wis.**

25-26 **MWBC Annual Meeting, Valley Baptist Church, Appleton, Wis.**

28-29 Missouri Baptist Annual Meeting, St. Charles Convention Center, St. Charles, Mo.

NOVEMBER

10-12 BGCT Annual Meeting, Waco, Texas

28-29 Thanksgiving Holiday – **MWBC Office Closed**

DECEMBER

1-8 Week of Prayer for International Missions/Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

25-1/1 Christmas/New Year’s Holiday – **MWBC Office Closed**

27-1/5 **Israel Trip**

Hmong National Baptist Association boosts budget to help homelands

By Karen L. Willoughby

Green Lake, Wis. (BP) – The need is so great in Southeast Asia that the Hmong Baptist National Association increased its budget by \$100,000 to help.

The motion to increase the budget to \$280,000 was passed without discussion during the Sept. 27-30 annual gathering of the Southern Baptist fellowship group.

“We have 52 churches now,” Executive Director Tra Xiong told Baptist Press. “This year we plant two new churches and next year two or three new churches. Every year we have a vision to plant a new church.”

The additional money in the 2024 budget, all of which comes from Hmong churches, will help plant churches in the mountains of Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, construct church buildings, install water systems, buy animals and pay for gas so leaders can travel throughout the regions.

“We have to help them,” Xiong said. “We need to support them; they are very poor. They don’t have water systems so [no indoor

plumbing.] They don’t have a church building. We have to help the people without families who can’t work. We have to help the leaders.”

The Hmong National Fellowship has had its “Love and Care Ministry” for 20 years. Overseas they buy animals – cows, pigs, goats, chickens – for people who are disabled and who don’t have families to help them. The milk, eggs and offspring from the animals help provide financially for those with disabilities.

“We buy females so they can bear a child and give milk,” Xiong said. “That will bring an increase and support that person for a long time. We ask village to help with animal care.”

Hmong churches also are ready to help sister churches in the U.S.

“In the U.S. we help in other ways, like if the pastor pass away, Love and Care will help with the wife,” Xiong continued. “We just kind of love each other, care for each other and abiding together, that’s what Love and Care program is.”

The Hmong annual meeting starts with a Wednesday evening service. Small group



The Hmong National Baptist Association elected these as officers, left to right: Vice President Pao Ly, First Hmong Baptist Church, Morganton, N.C.; Executive Director Tra Xiong, Hmong Baptist National Association, Oakdale Minn.; Youth Director Christopher Vang, Hmong Baptist Church, Fresno, Cal.; Women’s Director Mary Vang Her, One in Christ Church, Hudson, Wis.; Pastoral Director Cha Yang, Hmong Baptist Church, Fresno, Cal.; Treasurer Lydia Ly, Followers of Christ Hmong Baptist Church, St. Paul, Minn.; Men’s Director Tong Pao Vang, United Hmong Baptist Church, Sun Prairie, Wis.; President Chong Pao Thao, First Hmong Baptist Church, Broomfield, Col. Less than a month after the meeting, Executive Director Xiong passed away on Oct. 31.

conferences take place on Thursday. Business is taken care of on Friday, and Saturday closes with a final worship service.

The only business besides the budget this year was the election of officers:

President Chong Pao Thao, pastor of First Hmong Baptist Church in Broomfield, Colorado, a Denver suburb. Vice-President Pao Ly, pastor of First Hmong Baptist Church in Morganton, North Carolina. Treasurer Lydia Ly, a member of Follower of Christ Baptist Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. A secretary and moderator are to be elected at a later date.

With limited business discussions, the Hmong gathering majored on worship, small group conferences and fellowship for the 235 attendees at the Green Lake Christian Conference Center, perhaps a record high attendance. The theme was Do Not Fear, taken from Isaiah 41:10.

“We want the Christian not to fear to share the Gospel to the unchurched,” Xiong said in explaining the theme.

Pastor Daniel Yang led the Thursday pastors’ conference. Zer Vang led the women’s conference. Txerchai Chang led the men’s conference. Chris Vang led the youth conference.

Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention’s Executive Director Leo Endel discussed at the pastors’ conference what the Bible says about speaking in tongues.

“There has been some issue about that,” Xiong said. “I asked him to teach the pastors so they can go back to their church and teach their

congregation what the Bible says, to help their congregation.”

Endel told the pastors, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:2 “the person who speaks in a tongue is not speaking to people but to God. . . .”

“What Paul seems to be describing is a private experience that was being brought into corporate worship and causing controversy and confusion,” Endel said. “Paul argues that this is not allowable unless there is an interpreter. What is spoken in public worship should be understandable.”

To Baptist Press Endel said, “It is always an incredible blessing to be with my Hmong brothers and sisters and to see the way God is using them throughout the world to bring people to Jesus. Their story has the fingerprints of God all over it. He uniquely prepared them to take the Gospel to places that are very difficult for any other



Attendees pose for a group photo at the Hmong Baptist National Association annual meeting held Sept. 27-30 at Green Lake (Wis.) Conference Center.

BOOSTS

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people. God called a people to Himself who never had a nation of their own to touch the nations of the world for Jesus!”

The men’s conference was about reaching the next generation. Pao Ly discussed the gap between the generations, Xiong said, explaining, “We have to reach between these two groups so we can do ministry together.”

Worship for the Hmong annual meeting was led by La Herr, pastor of Hmong Hope Community Baptist Church in Spring Lake Park, Minn.

Guest speakers included Pao Yang, liaison for Hmong Baptist churches in Vietnam; an IMB missionary in Thailand; Cha Herr, pastor of Hmong Baptist Church in Fresno, Calif.; Tonger Vang, pastor of First Hmong Baptist Church in Coon Rapids, Minn.; and outgoing President Chue Ger Herr pastor of First Hmong Baptist in Kansas City, Kan.

“I saw this year we have a very blessed time,” Xiong said. “Even the evenings going very smooth and true worship. I think this year God is blessing our conference and blessing everybody to understand it’s time to take HBNA churches to the next level.”

The 2024 annual meeting of the Hmong National Baptist Convention is set for Fresno, Calif., with dates and specific location to be announced later.

Back to the beginning

Hmong youth camps bridge generations

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP) – Language is a distinct bond among Hmong people, who have no official homeland today, but generally trace their ancestry to China 4,000 years ago.

The distinction drives one of the major challenges Hmong Southern Baptists face today – building unity and cohesion across generations, as younger Hmong adopt English as a primary language, said Christopher Vang, youth ministry director of the Hmong Baptist National Association (HBNA).

“Without the Hmong language, who are we?” Vang posed hypothetically. “I think that’s something a lot of churches are still holding onto, because they see that if we lose the Hmong language, there’s not a distinct way to identify us.”

The HBNA summer youth camps, held annually in Tennessee and California, have been a major tool in bridging the gaps between first, second and third generation Hmong in the U.S. today, Vang said. The culture and language are variously interwoven into the curriculum and activities.

With the 51 Southern Baptist Hmong churches scattered among 16 states, many travel long distances to attend the camps, including Standing Stones Camp in Tennessee in July, and Living Water Conference in California in August.

The 2023 camps together drew 600 attendees from 30 church-

es, and generated 28 decisions for Christ and dozens of inquiries regarding the plan of salvation. A dozen youth were baptized at Living Water Conference, and 15 were baptized at Standing Stones, while others will be baptized in the coming months at individual churches, Vang said.

Xai Lor, associate pastor of First Hmong Baptist Church in Coon Rapids, Minn., said he has seven students scheduled to be baptized from professions made at camp.

Lor believes the camps model transgenerational unity.

“I believe that it models what the church should look like when it comes to holistic ministries,” Lor said. “I believe this camp shows the next generation that if we come together we will be able to see how effective the church can be.”

The camps showcase a variety of age groups in leadership, but Lor said the challenge is continuing the example in the local church setting.

“I don’t, however, believe that this is something that will easily transition to the local church due to our cultural context,” Lor said. “Culturally, age groups are divided to men, women, youth, and children. Usually we don’t interact much as a whole, but it is something we strive to reach.”

Peter Yanes, Southern Baptist Convention



Worship at Hmong summer youth camps is multi-generational.

Executive Committee associate vice president of Asian relations, appreciates the HBNA’s investment in the next generation of leaders.

“It encourages me to witness our Hmong American Christian leaders investing in the next generation for discipleship and leadership development,” Yanes said. “It should be the focus of every immigrant church as they address this ever-changing culture to prepare young leaders to reach their generation with the Gospel for Jesus Christ.”

Vang himself accepted Christ at the Living Water Conference at age 16. Today, he leads youth ministry at Hmong Baptist Church of Fresno, Calif., where periodic Bridge Sundays combine English and Hmong language worship services.

“There’s this audience who no longer really speaks Hmong and they just speak English now. How do we cater to them? And we started an English service,” Vang said. “But we still want them to feel united as a church. So we have that Bridge Sunday to help

that.”

Vang, 29, mostly speaks English but is taking classes to refresh his fluency in Hmong. His parents came to the U.S. as Vietnamese refugees.

“Being a second-generation Hmong person, I see the need to learn both languages,” said Vang, who describes the Hmong language as “very unique and precious.”

Many Hmong churches hold onto the native language to retain a distinct identity.

“We do have Hmong clothing, some Hmong food,” he said, “but for the most part, I think the Hmong language is the big indicator that we are Hmong. And I think that’s why we have this back-and-forth between the generations” regarding Hmong and English.

Vang sees himself uniquely positioned to bridge the divide between the first and third generations.

“I’m not only working with youth, but I’m working with parents,” he said. “I see that God has really given me a great opportunity to serve that need.”

Mission Gifts from the Churches

MINNESOTA WISCONSIN BAPTIST CONVENTION COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

January-November 2023

Cooperative Program Budget 2023 Year to Date	\$489,256.50
Cooperative Program Receipts 2023 Year to Date	\$422,607.56
Under Budget 2023 Year to Date	\$66,648.94

NAME	CP YTD
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BAY LAKES BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Amherst, Amherst Bible Church	\$250.00
Appleton, Hmong Baptist Mission	\$1,700.00
Appleton, Valley	\$40,569.79
Clintonville, First Baptist Church	\$1,543.96
Green Bay, Graceway Fellowship	\$3,543.07
Green Bay, Highland Crest	\$46,398.57
Manitowoc, New Beginnings	\$254.86
Neenah, Living Vine Church	\$400.00
Sheboygan, Mapledale Baptist	\$2,534.34
Stevens Point, Tapestry	\$200.00
Tilleda, Bethany Baptist Church	\$1,846.80
Waupaca, Fellowship Baptist	\$1,496.05
BLBA TOTAL	\$100,737.44

LAKELAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bassett, Westosha Baptist	\$1,299.00
Brown Deer, Brown Deer Baptist	\$1,000.00
Franklin, Emmaus Fellowship	\$600.00
Hartland, Disciples Church	\$2,250.00
Kenosha, Amistad Cristiana	\$2,100.00
Kenosha, Fellowship Baptist	\$10,581.86
Kenosha, Parkside Baptist	\$2,755.53
Milwaukee, Ephesians Baptist	\$900.00
Milwaukee, Grace Point	\$101.99
Milwaukee, Korean Baptist	\$900.00
Milwaukee, Layton Avenue	\$9,436.07
Milwaukee, Mercy Memorial	\$1,200.00
Milwaukee, Milwaukee Arabic	\$1,113.33
Milwaukee, Monumental Baptist	\$325.00
Milwaukee, Mt Horeb Baptist	\$300.00
Milwaukee, Mt Pilgrim	\$1,200.00
Milwaukee, Northwest Baptist	\$2,924.85
Milwaukee, UFlourish Church	\$1,435.96
Mount Pleasant, I.C.A.R.E. Ministry	\$864.35
Mount Pleasant, Immanuel	\$7,868.58
Pewaukee, Crossroads Church	\$2,822.91
Racine, Hope Community Church	\$2,051.46
Wauwatosa, Redemption Church	\$1,200.00
LBA TOTAL	\$55,230.89

NORTHWOODS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bemidji, Ridgewood Baptist	\$912.00
Cambridge, Cross Pointe Church	\$2,475.00
Crookston, Prairie Community	\$3,644.96
Ely, Berean Baptist	\$1,000.00
Grand Rapids, Calvary Pines	\$1,640.00
Hill City, Hill City Baptist Church	\$900.00
New York Mills, Grace Connection	\$1,155.00
Rice Lake, Hope Baptist Church	\$4,658.90
Roseau, Immanuel Baptist	\$4,041.54
Warroad, Westside Baptist	\$1,677.97
NWBA TOTAL	\$22,105.37

NAME

CP YTD

TWIN CITIES METRO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Amery, Journey Church	\$10,755.44
Bloomington, Hope of Nations Fellowship	\$994.20
Bloomington, MN Kangnam Korean	\$900.00
Bloomington, Southtown Baptist	\$14,200.30
Brooklyn Park, Ebenezer	\$600.00
Brooklyn Park, North Center	\$1,792.47
Burnsville, Berean Baptist	\$2,000.00
Coon Rapids, First Hmong	\$1,750.00
Eagan, Good News Church	\$4,800.00
Fridley, Good News Hmong	\$500.00
Maple Grove, Northwood Community	\$800.00
Maple Grove, Unlock Church	\$800.00
Minneapolis, All Peoples Church	\$4,860.00
Minneapolis, Gracepoint	\$1,300.00
Minneapolis, Shalom Community	\$1,000.00
Minnetonka, Redeemer Bible	\$900.00
Monticello, First Baptist Church	\$321.92
Monticello, Grace Bible Church	\$1,050.00
New Hope, Westview Church	\$2,500.00
New Prague, Calvary Church	\$17,054.69
North St. Paul - Eternal Life Hmong	\$1,848.00
Ramsey, Bethlehem Worship Center	\$550.00
Richfield, Richfield Bible Church	\$600.00
Roseville, Roseville Baptist	\$5,600.00
Roseville, Twin City Hmong	\$1,620.00
Spring Lake Park, Hmong Hope	\$500.00
St. Louis Park, First Ukrainian Ev	\$500.00
St. Paul, Cities Church	\$10,000.00
St. Paul, Followers Of Christ	\$5,770.00
St. Paul, Gracepoint Midwest	\$1,200.00
St. Paul, Iglesia Hispana Betel	\$1,175.00
Sunfish Lake, Bethel Baptist	\$5,715.39
Sunfish Lake, Vietnamese Baptist	\$540.00
White Bear Lake, Emmaus	\$11,927.00
TCMBA TOTAL	\$116,424.41



A total of 62 attended the TCMBA annual meeting Oct. 2 at Northwood Community Church in Maple Grove. Each pastor gave a two-minute praise report from their church. In addition, they heard reports on accountability groups, monthly lunches, summer internship, and mission trips. They adopted the 2024 budget.

Mission Gifts from the Churches

NAME	CP YTD	NAME	CP YTD
SOUTHERN WI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION		SOUTHERN MINNESOTA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION	
Boscobel, Blue River Valley	\$893.64	Austin, Austin Baptist Church	\$3,845.25
Janesville, Bethel Church	\$2,228.52	Chester, Chester Woods	\$1,402.34
Janesville, Casa de Oracion	\$20.00	Eyota, Hmong Baptist Church	\$1,000.00
Janesville, Resonate Church	\$3,859.79	Marshall, Radiant Life Church	\$2,144.60
La Crosse, Crossway Church	\$1,200.00	Red Wing, Hiawatha Valley	\$3,209.50
La Crosse, New Hope	\$600.00	Rochester, Emmanuel Baptist	\$9,500.20
Madison, Antioch Fellowship	\$600.00	Rochester, Northbridge Church	\$5,247.00
Madison, Campus Community	\$1,350.00	Rochester, Redemption City	\$12,260.65
Madison, East Madison Baptist	\$6,225.00	Rochester, Rochester Community	\$800.00
Madison, Emmanuel Church	\$155.00	Sartell, Faith Journey Church	\$4,359.36
Madison, Gracepoint	\$1,200.00	St. Cloud, St. Cloud International	\$450.00
Madison, Hope In Christ Assembly	\$816.80	Winona, Cornerstone Community	\$2,711.55
Madison, Livingstone Baptist	\$2,602.00	SMNBA TOTAL	\$46,930.45
Madison, Midvale Baptist Church	\$11,699.49		
Madison, Red Village	\$4,250.00		
Madison, Shalom Christian	\$425.00	OTHER	
Monroe, Redemption Church	\$399.39	Eau Claire, Jacob's Well	\$6,800.00
Platteville, Rolling Hills	\$6,031.34	Eau Claire, One in Christ Church	\$1,391.89
Reedsburg, Trinity Baptist	\$13,050.00	OTHER TOTAL	\$8,191.89
Sparta, Gospel Baptist Church	\$2,840.72		
Sun Prairie, Christ Fellowship	\$900.00		
Sun Prairie, Reborn in Christ	\$1,550.81		
Sun Prairie, Transformation	\$2,490.73		
Sun Prairie, United Hmong	\$881.49		
Verona, Memorial Baptist Church	\$250.00		
Waterloo, Centro Biblico La Roca	\$120.00		
Waterloo, Cornerstone Church	\$1,100.00		
Watertown, Watertown Community	\$450.00		
WI Dells, Rock of Hope	\$1,800.00		
WI Rapids, Church at Wazeecha	\$2,697.39		
WI Rapids, First Baptist Church	\$300.00		
SWBA TOTAL	\$72,987.11	MWBC TOTAL RECEIVED	\$422,607.56

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

CP - Cooperative Program

GOOD

continued from page three

sweet for bitter. Woe to those who consider themselves wise and judge themselves clever." (Isa. 5:20-21) God will ultimately judge the evildoers by His just standards.

How have we come to the point where evil is good and good is evil? Is this not exactly the beachhead that Satan successfully established in the original temptation? God gave Adam and Eve but one rule: "Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." But Satan planted doubt about the goodness of God:

"God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." This is the original lie! With this first rebellion against God, all of creation fell and Pandora's box of evil poisoned God's good creation. Suffering and death have ruled ever since. Satan has consistently challenged the goodness of God and of His Word.

Satan won the first battle of the war between good and evil, but evil will be destroyed. It is "doomed to destruction forever." God will deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13) and Satan will be punished day and night

forever (Rev. 20:10).

At the cross of Christ, God took upon Himself the evil of all human history. For three days it appeared that evil had won. But on the third day, He rose victorious. He conquered death and triumphed over evil. The ultimate good conquered the ultimate evil.

In the end, GOD wins. GOOD wins! "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His faithful love endures forever." (Psa. 136:1)

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

Back to the beginning



FreeWill's will-writing tool is an online service that allows anyone to write a legally valid will in under 25 minutes, for free! 70% of American adults don't have one because the process can seem complicated or scary. FreeWill solves that problem by making writing a will easy and accessible. Visit our specialized site to begin and ensure your church stays strong for generations to come.

To write your will, visit FreeWill.com/MWBC

MEETING

continued from page one

A glance around the room revealed the ethnic diversity and international flavor and multi-generational involvement within the two-state convention, a quality that was clearly reflected on the platform as well, through speakers, preachers, music, and reports.

The convention's churches include Anglo, African American, Hmong, Korean, Hispanic, Liberian, Arabic, Moldovan, Laotian, Slavic, Vietnamese, and Ukrainian. More than 40 percent of the convention's churches are not majority Anglo churches.

There were plenty of the aged saints typical at a Baptist denominational meeting – men and women who have served and led for decades in MWBC. But there was also a sizable contingent of young adults, youth and children at the meeting, evidence of the convention's focus on reaching the next generation.

Immediately after the call to order, Endel announced a special offering to be divided between two international efforts undertaken by MWBC leaders: the completion of a missions building in Thailand and paying tuition for children in Liberia who are missing out on education because of the lack of funds. Attendees clicked on a QR code and gave \$1,086 to the offering.

Bible study during the sessions were led by Philip Nache, pastor

of Hope of Nations Fellowship Church in Bloomington, Minn.; Jeremiah Knoop, pastor of North Center Baptist Church in Brooklyn Park, Minn.; and Timothy Lor, pastor of Followers of Christ Hmong Baptist Church in St. Paul, Minn.

Music was led by worship leaders from First Hmong Baptist Church, Coon Rapids, Minn.; Ebenezer Community Church in Bloomington, Minn.; and Hope of Nations Fellowship, Bloomington, Minn.

The convention sermon was delivered by Sam Choi, pastor of All Peoples Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

In addition to representatives from various SBC entities, guests recognized included several from organizations in Argentina that are partnering with MWBC and Southern Wisconsin Baptist Association to provide a pipeline of pastors for new Spanish-speaking churches in the two states.

Messengers voted to re-elect as president Daniel Goba, pastor of Ebenezer Community Church in Bloomington, Minn. He had been elected as first vice president at the previous annual meeting and had ascended to the presidency when Bob Stine, pastor of Midvale Baptist Church in Madison, Wis., resigned in May.

Chris Phillips, associate pastor of children and youth at Trinity Baptist Church in Reedsburg, Wis., likewise had moved from second vice president to first vice president in

May and was re-elected to that position.

Elected as second vice president was Joe Young, associate pastor of First Hmong Baptist Church in Coon Rapids, Minn.

Messengers approved a 2024 budget of \$950,025 which is a 5 percent decrease from the \$1,001,376 budget approved last year. That 2023 budget, however, had already been reduced to \$935,797 in May due to income shortfalls, at which time the executive board had also reduced the Cooperative Program amount forwarded to national causes from 36 percent to 22 percent. For the 2024 budget the CP national percentage was further reduced to 20 percent.

The reduction of CP gifts sent to the SBC is in stark contrast to the convention's recent trend of increasing the percentage each year with a goal of someday reaching 50 percent. The percentage passed on to the SBC grew from 17 percent in 2015 to 20 percent in 2016, 22 percent in 2017, 32 percent in 2018, 35 percent in 2019, and 36 percent in 2020, and had remained at that level until the executive board's action in May to reduce it to 22 percent.

"National funding changes have necessitated adjustments at the state convention level," Endel had said at the time.

The 2024 annual meeting will be Oct. 25-26 at Valley Baptist Church in Appleton, Wis. The annual sermon will be given by

Jesse Beernink, pastor, Resonant Church, Janesville, Wis. The alternate preacher will be Philip Nache, pastor, Hope of Nations Gospel Church, Bloomington, Minn. The following year's annual meeting will be Oct.

24-25, 2025, at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Rochester, Minn.

Messengers approved one resolution, expressing appreciation to the host church, pastor, staff, and members.

Back to the beginning

KINGDOM

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space fully confident they will be caught.

Children are awed by God's creation.

They are mesmerized by grasshoppers, caterpillars, butterflies, and flowers. They stop and take time to watch an ant wrestle a crumb of bread across the ground. They notice the spots on a ladybug.

Children have great imaginations. Give a child a sandbox, a stick, or a can and they can construct unbelievable creations. I watched children recently playing in the sand. They were digging a hole. When I asked what it was, they stared at me with a puzzled look, as if I was the only one who did not

recognize the obvious.

They patiently explained that it was a grasshopper sanctuary.

This list isn't complete. You can add others, I am sure. Somewhere within each of us is buried the child we once were. Perhaps if we could re-connect with the child-like simplicity within us, we might take our first steps toward becoming Kingdom citizens as Jesus described it.

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

GOD'S WORK IN 2022
THROUGH THE WORK OF YOUR
IMB MISSIONARIES

- 122**
Countries
- 728,589**
People heard the gospel
- 178,177**
New believers
- 21,231**
New churches
- 102,417**
Baptisms

IMB