

# Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist

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## Strategy planning survey coming

Rochester, Minn. — Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention is looking for input in planning for the future.

The strategy planning team appointed by Ex-

ecutive Director Trey Turner at the annual meeting in October will send out a survey soon to church leaders.

Matt Wunderlin, team member, encourages all

churches to take time to respond to the survey — especially those who don't have time for another survey.

"If you skip it, the next five years of

MWBC strategy will be perfectly constructed for churches that don't need help," he said, writing in a guest col-

See **STRATEGY** page 2

## Pastors and Wives Retreat

Green Lake, Wis. — This year's Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention Pastor and Wives Retreat will be sponsored by the Great Commandment Network, a religious non-profit which describes itself as "a global network empowering people to experience and reproduce great relationships through loving God and others."

The retreat is Feb. 5-7 at Green Lake (Wis.) Conference

Center. The retreat starts with registration on Thursday at 4 p.m. and ends at 12 noon on Saturday. Lunch is not provided on the last day.

The Great Commandment Network's sponsorship will come in the form of providing three couples to lead in a Galatians 6:6 Retreat for couples in ministry. The Great Commandment Network has done these

See **RETREAT** page 2

## Empower 2026

Green Lake, Wis. — Empower continues the momentum of last year's "Advancing the Gospel" theme from the annual meeting and state missions offering, providing practical ways to share the good news in our communities, especially through evangelistic compassion ministries.

Now is the time to register for the Mar. 6-7 event at Green Lake (Wis.) Confer-

ence Center. Go to **MWBC.org** for more information.

Speakers include:

- Sammy Simmons, national project director, Send Relief
- Tim LeFleur, director of spiritual formation, Follow the Call
- Gary Jennings, executive director, CityLife
- Greg Byman, lead pastor, St. Joe Community Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.

## Minneapolis protests having profound impact on churches, pastors say

By Scott Barkley

MINNEAPOLIS (BP) — As protests escalate, one emotion remains prominent in this city where a majority of Southern Baptist churches are multiethnic or non-Anglo. It has shaped — and been shaped by — confrontations that have now

led to mentions of invoking the Insurrection Act.

And in a time when people need each other and the Gospel, it has also led to isolation.

"Fear," said Trey Turner, executive director for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention. "It has stifled church gather-

ings [and made] people want to keep to themselves. If everyone is tuned out, how are they supposed to hear the message?"

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) deployments to the Minneapolis area, since named Operation Metro Surge, have grown to approxi-

mately 2,000 and DHS describing it as "its largest immigration operation ever."

The Jan. 7 fatal shooting by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent has become a Rorschach test of sorts, with extreme viewpoints amplified through social media.

A Jan. 14 "targeted traffic stop" resulted in a chase and hospital trips for a federal agent and the man he shot. DHS said the officer fired his weapon in self-defense when the man and two others attacked him with a shovel and broom han-

See **PROTEST** page 6

# Church planting labs set

Rochester, Minn. – Pastors exploring church planting will want to check out the Residency Builder and Sending Lab offered in Wisconsin in January and February.

The Residency Builder is designed to help pastors and church leaders build an intentional process for training qualified leaders to be church

planters. It's a collaborative experience to help leaders discover and develop their unique plan for equipping potential planters. The participants will leave the Residency Builder with a framework and the beginning steps to implement a residency in their church. The two-day conference will be Jan. 26-27 at

Trinity Baptist, Reedsburg, Wis. Lunches will be provided. Click [here](#) to register by Jan. 18.

The Sending Lab will be Feb. 28 at Northwest Baptist in Milwaukee. This is a one-day workshop to help pastors develop a vision and plan for leading their church to send. Click [here](#) to register.

## STRATEGY

*continued from page one*

umn for the M-W Baptist ([see page 4](#)).

The survey asks what challenges churches face and what resources they need.

“Your answers will directly determine our strategic priorities for the next five years,” Wunderlin said.

Input from the churches is vital for planning effective strategy, he said.

“We need to know which training events feel essential and which are distractions,” he said. “We need to know

what expectations create pressure instead of support. We need to know what gaps leave you navigating crisis alone and what resources you’d never use even if we offered them.”

Surveys will appear in leaders’ email inboxes soon. A quick response is requested. Results will be reported during the April executive board meeting.

The strategy team, tasked with developing a five-year plan to guide MWBC’s priorities through 2030, is composed of Matt Wunderlin, pastor, Rolling Hills Church,

Platteville, Wis.; Chris Phillips, pastor of administration and discipleship, Trinity Baptist Church, Reedsburg, Wis.; Clint Calvert, elder, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Rochester, Minn.; Paul Fries, member, Trinity Baptist Church, Reedsburg, Wis.; Paul Springer, pastor, Northwest Baptist Church, Wauwatosa, Wis.; Charles Dunning, member, Valley Baptist Church, Appleton, Wis.; and Dee Thao, member, First Hmong Baptist Church, Coon Rapids, Minn.

## Back to the beginning



## RETREAT

*continued from page one*

retreats for 30 years having now served more than 14,000 couples.

The weekend is a time of personal renewal and encouragement. Content is drawn from David and Teresa Ferguson’s acclaimed book, *The Great Commandment Principle*.

“This year’s Pastors and Wives Retreat will give us the opportunity to work on our relationships as ministry couples,” said Clint Calvert, MWBC leadership development consultant. “It looks to be a refreshing, soul-strengthening experience.”

The retreat is free to all MWBC lead pastors

plus one additional pastor from churches with multiple pastoral staff. Retired MWBC pastors are welcome to attend as well. The financial support for this retreat is funded through your church’s Cooperative Program giving and the Texas Baptists’ Mary Hill Davis Offering.

The retreat is designed for fellowship, renewal and growth. Dress is casual. Child-care is not provided. Infants less than six months or still nursing are welcome. However, since this is a “get-away” weekend for all, you’ll need to find alternative care with friends and family for other children.

[Click here](#) to register.

## Back to the beginning



Minnesota-Wisconsin Woman’s Missionary Union gathers for the Baptist Women World Day of Prayer gathering at Roseville Baptist Church, Nov. 3, 2025.

# Strengthening the trellis for a fruitful future

Happy New Year! I am excited about the year ahead in our two states. Together, we can celebrate 852 baptisms among our churches even as we continue to collect annual church profile data. Through-out our annual meeting and state missions offering promotion, we have



## Perspectives

Trey Turner

repeated a single word: Advance.

Advancing the gospel is the main purpose of the state convention. While it is a logistical challenge, I wish we could celebrate every individual gospel conversation, every life change, every first-time faith commitment, and every baptism as heaven does.

Churches advance the gospel when they proclaim the bankruptcy of life without the guiding influence of Christ. The church fosters and develops men and women who will share life in

Christ. Because salvation and disciple making happen through the local church, that work must remain primary. The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention exists to celebrate, support, and catalyze that work.

As we enter the second quarter of this century, we must be clear about how to remove obstacles and build bridges for a greater Kingdom impact. To visualize this, think of the convention as a trellis. The vine is the living organism which grows, climbs, and bears fruit. The trellis lifts the vine off the ground and provides a framework for growth, ensuring every part has access to the light.

Kingdom work hap-

pens in your sanctuaries and neighborhoods. You foster people coming to faith and growing in Christ. The convention, as a trellis, serves two main functions: support and catalyze.

**Support Function:** MWBC seeks to maximize the health and fruitfulness of the vine. We help churches network for pulpit supply and transitional care. We provide resources for best practices, child protection policies, estate planning, tax compliance, and retirement planning. We also assist in crisis management, conflict mitigation, disaster response, and emergency care. Furthermore, by networking churches with specific specializations, such as pastoral

counseling, we create a tremendous collective resource.

**Catalyzing Function:** MWBC provides demographic and community mapping that a single church might not otherwise access. Our staff can connect your church to planting partnerships and mission efforts. We also provide learning labs and cohorts that offer just-in-time solutions for the unique challenges of your ministry.

Soon, leaders will receive a strategic planning questionnaire via email. This survey is the greatest opportunity we have to explore and improve our trellis. It will ask where you and your church need this struc-

See **FUTURE** page 11

## The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist:

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

- A Christian newsmagazine 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.

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For centuries Western Civilization has embraced the Ten Commandments as the bedrock for law and conduct. But, in the 21st century, such an assumption no longer holds true. Bit by bit the Ten Commandments are being chiseled from their central position in our culture.

- In 2001, after a two-year legal battle, a 5,280 pound granite Ten Commandments



## Reflections

Bill Tinsley

monument was removed from the rotunda of the Alabama State Capitol.

- In 2004 the Sixth District Court of Appeals in Kentucky ruled that the Ten Commandments could no longer be displayed in public schools and courthouses. To do so, the court ruled, would be an endorsement of religion.

- In 2014, followers of the pagan faith, Wicca, sued the city

of Bloomfield, N.M., over a 3,000 pound Ten Commandments monument that stood in front of the city hall. The court ruled the monument had to be removed as it violated First Amendment rights.

- In June 2015 the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled that the presence of the Ten Commandments on the capitol grounds was unconstitutional. On Oct. 5, under cover of darkness, the 4,800 pound slab of stone was moved from the Oklahoma State Capitol grounds to a private location.

- In 2025 at least three states passed laws requiring the Ten Commandments be displayed in school classrooms. District courts ruled the laws unconstitutional. The issue appears headed to the Supreme Court.

These reflect sensitive legal issues in our nation that values freedom of religion and separation of church and state. But **what is more disturbing than the removal of monuments is the removal of the Ten Commandments from our consciousness.** Few can

See **MORAL** page 11

# The Word became flesh

In John 1:14, Scripture describes the incarnation of Jesus. The Word, which is referring to Jesus, became flesh and dwelled among us. Even though Jesus did not have to come down from heaven to fulfill the promise of salvation, He did so in humility to show us the



## Intercultural

**Na Herr**

glory of God. In his incarnation, Jesus demonstrated the love of God in a very tangible way. He preached the gospel, healed the sick, and freed the oppressed. He spoke truth, but he always did it with compassion and grace. His words and actions made an incredible im-

pact on the disciples, and they continued serving faithfully long after Jesus had ascended to heaven.

Faith is incarnational; it is a lived experience that requires going and doing. It is not just sitting at church for two hours every Sunday morning. That is not the example that Jesus modeled for us. Jesus spent a lot of time with sinners and tax collectors, and he always ministered to them in real, tangible ways.

As we seek to imitate

Jesus, we need to put our faith into action. For some, it could be serving at a soup kitchen. For others, it could be teaching English to an immigrant or foreigner. There are many opportunities locally and globally to put our faith into action. When we are living out our faith, gospel conversations come up and hearts are changed.

I want to highlight a new opportunity to put faith into action. Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention is current-

ly organizing a small group of pastors and leaders to go on a vision tour to Poland. The team will be prayer walking, helping at an English club, and encouraging local believers in evangelism. If you are interested in going on this trip, please contact me ([herr@mwbc.org](mailto:herr@mwbc.org)) or Phil Smith ([phil@smithmn.com](mailto:phil@smithmn.com)).

*Na Herr is missions and operations director for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.*

## Strategic Planning Survey: Why Drowning Pastors Must Respond

You don't have time for another survey. But if you skip it, the next five years of MWBC strategy will be perfectly constructed for churches that don't need help.

That's survivors' bias – the statistical reality when only people with margin respond. The thriving church with five staff members fills out the questionnaire. The bivocational pastor working overtime and the rural shepherd barely holding it together . . . they never get past the subject line.

And then we inadvertently create a strategic plan disconnected from the reality most pastors face.

In January, Executive



## Guest Column

**Matt Wunderlin**

Director Trey Turner introduced a powerful metaphor: the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention functions as a trellis - lifting the vine off the ground, providing framework for growth, and ensuring every part has access to light. The vine is your church. The fruit happens in your sanctuary and neighborhood. The trellis exists to support and catalyze Kingdom work.

But here's the question that determines everything: What kind of trellis actually helps a drowning pastor?

As a pastor myself, I know the 7-day routine. Sunday preparation

bleeds into Monday meetings, Tuesday counseling, Wednesday programming, Thursday administration, Friday family (if you're disciplined), Saturday setup. Repeat. When you're already struggling to breathe, another initiative feels like another weight pulling you down.

The worst possible outcome would be designing a trellis that looks impressive on paper but stifles fruit instead of cultivating it.

This is your opportunity to tell us what parts of the trellis to remove, what to strengthen, and where we're accidentally shading the vine instead of lifting it toward light. The survey asks: What challenges threaten your church's viability? What's the main reason you haven't engaged more with

MWBC? If you were king for a day, what one resource would strengthen churches across our convention?

Your answers will directly determine our strategic priorities for the next five years.

But we can't have effective strategy without your input. We need to know which training events feel essential and which are distractions. We need to know what expectations create pressure instead of support. We need to know what gaps leave you navigating crisis alone and what resources you'd never use even if we offered them.

The difference between relief and burden isn't theoretical; it's in the specific realities only you can describe. Your voice is essential, not optional.

The trellis doesn't tell the vine how to grow;

it lifts the vine, so all its energy goes toward bearing fruit.

The Strategic Planning Committee will present our findings at the April Executive Board meeting. What we present depends entirely on what we hear from you. This survey isn't busywork. It's the diagnostic that determines whether the next five years bring relief or just more weight.

Please watch for the survey in your inbox and complete it within two weeks of receipt.

Your voice matters. Your reality matters. Your exhaustion matters. We'll listen if you'll speak.

Help us build the right trellis.

*Matt Wunderlin is lead pastor at Rolling Hills Church in Platteville, Wis., and chair of the MWBC Strategic Planning Committee.*

## Reflecting on the past, looking to the future

We made it around the sun one more time.

As 2025 has come to a close and we begin 2026, it is a time when many consider making resolutions.

A gym jokingly offered a four-week membership option believing that is the typical length that many resolutions last.

On a more serious note, the new year provides an opportunity for reflection on the past as we look to the future.

For me 2025 was a mixture of highs and lows.

My son was reunited with his wife after years of separation. My adult children and their spouses are all healthy and my grandchildren are prospering as well. As a convention, the MWBC was blessed with a very smooth transition as Dr. Endel entered retirement and Dr. Turner assumed the mantle of leadership as our executive director. All these and so many more are things to celebrate.

2025 was a difficult time personally as I learned of the passing of three of my close friends



**Student  
Ministries**  
*Bob Smith*

and colleagues in ministry. For each one of them it was comforting to me

to know that they, in their own way, had run with perseverance the race set before them. Along with the Apostle Paul, it can be said that they fought

the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith. Their passing was a stark reminder of the brevity of life and the importance of fulfilling the purpose that Jesus has for each one of us. My paraphrase of the words of Jesus: "I have come that you might have a life full of meaning and purpose..."

As we begin this new year, let us learn from the lessons of the past and look forward with anticipation to the good things God has in store as we join together in our commitment to share the Good News of salvation across Minnesota and Wisconsin. May our partnerships in ministry reach beyond the Midwest to fulfill the Great Commission.

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

**Minnesota-Wisconsin  
Baptist**



Sammy Simmons  
National Project Director  
Send Relief



Tim LaFleur  
Director of  
Spiritual Formation  
Follow the Call



Gary Jennings  
Executive Director  
CityLife



Greg Byman  
Lead Pastor  
St Joe  
Community Church

**EMPOWER**  
March 6-7, 2026  
Green Lake, WI  
Advancing the  
Gospel:  
Evangelism in  
Compassion  
Ministry

Call Green Lake  
Conference  
Center for Room  
Reservations  
920-294-3323

Register for  
EMPOWER at  
[EMPOWER2026.eventbrite.com](https://EMPOWER2026.eventbrite.com)



## Equip NextGen Ministry Conference



**April 10-11**  
**Southtown Baptist Church**  
**Bloomington, MN**



**Chuck Peters**  
Director of LifeWay NextGen



**Trey Turner**  
Executive Director MWGen

This conference is for all leaders & volunteers in Children and Youth Ministries. It will be a time of encouragement, equipping, community and fun. Make plans to bring everyone who works with the youth and children's ministries.



**Price:**  
\$29 until 01/01/2026  
\$39 until 3/15/2026  
\$49 after 3/15/2026



Senior Pastor may attend free with a paid registration from their church.  
If you have any questions, please ask on Facebook @ MWBC KidMin Community  
or call Penny @ 218-340-0862

## PROTEST

continued from page one

dle.

This morning, President Trump threatened the use of the Insurrection Act if Minnesota leaders “don’t obey the law and stop the professional agitators and insurrectionists.”

Associational mission strategist Chris Reinertson called it “a challenging time” for churches in the Twin Cities Metro Baptist Association.

“It’s been really a challenge for all of us,” said Reinertson, pastor of Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, a suburb of Minneapolis. “I’ve had the privilege to reach out to them over the last few days. I’ve had dozens of conversations with the pastors. There’s a lot of fear.”

He estimates that over half of the churches in the association, like his, are multiethnic. Concerns about detainment, regardless of legal status, grow with reports such as Native Americans being swept up and questioned.

Many pastors in Reinertson’s association were born in “dozens of other countries around the world. God has called them here to plant churches,” he said. “The immigrant fear is really high. People are fearful to come and meet together.”

In a callback to the COVID lockdown, churches have grown more dependent on streaming or online church. Many pastors,



Trey Turner (left), executive director for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention, speaks with Chris Reinertson, associational mission strategist for the Twin Cities Metro Baptist Association, at a meeting of Twin Cities pastors Jan. 15. Photo by Brandon Porter

including Reinertson, have had to minister with families personally impacted.

“We need prayer for those pastors,” he said. “I’ve had to walk with [families] to try and figure out how to contact [a family member] and find out where they are. It’s a huge need, because people have been taken.”

Personal connections to the immigration debate crank up perspectives.

“There are many strong opinions throughout our church-

es,” said Turner. “Please pray for those who struggle with fear. One young man I know worried for his family so much that his immune system went down and he got shingles. Pray for people to look to God and find peace in Jesus.”

Joshua Whetstone, Send Network church planting leader for Minnesota and Wisconsin, called the Twin Cities’ ethnic diversity “one of our greatest church planting strengths.”

However, he added,

“The current reality in the Twin Cities is causing our ethnic community to rethink everything they go to, including church.”

Pastors are keeping in contact with each other, said Reinertson, teaming up so church members remember that Jesus is “the Prince of Peace and at the core of who we are in the midst of the unknown.”

Prayer remains the first and main option when it comes to easing the tension both inside and outside church

walls. But Reinertson adds another for those outside of his state.

“Prayer. Clearly, that’s No. 1,” said Reinertson. “But if there’s any connection with a pastor or church in the Twin Cities or Minnesota, make that connection. Reach out and ask how you can help, how you can pray and encourage.”

*Scott Barkley is chief national correspondent for Baptist Press.*

# Christianity numbers stabilize; Gen Z's faith picture complicated

By Aaron Earls

(BP) The latest Pew Research study finds Christianity remains stable after decades of decline, while the story for young adults remains complicated.

Since 2020, the percentage of Americans who identify as Christian has hovered in the low to mid-60s. Those with no religious preference have consistently made up almost 30 percent of the population, while those of other religions comprise less than 10 percent.

Currently, 62 percent of U.S. adults say they're Christian, 28 percent are religiously unaffiliated, and 8 percent belong to other religions.

Additionally, other religious practices have also remained steady. The percentage of those who pray daily has been in the upper-40s, now at 46 percent. The percentage of Americans who say religion is very important in their lives has been in the mid-40s, now at 43 percent. And the percentage of those who attend religious services at least once or twice a month has been in the mid-30s, now at 34 percent.

But what about Gen Z? How do they compare with previous generations?

## Gen Z's religious status

Based on some specific findings and anecdotal evidence, many have purported that young adults are experiencing

ing a religious revival. While Pew allows that some changes may be taking place that have yet to be captured in national surveys, they say there is "no clear evidence that this kind of nationwide religious resurgence is underway."

Despite the general pronouncement, there are some noteworthy happenings in the religious landscape of Gen Z.

The population-wide stability has extended to Gen Z, which is noteworthy in and of itself. After years of younger generations growing increasingly secular, the past five years have been remarkably steady for Gen Z.

The gender gap in American religion has narrowed among younger generations, according to Pew Research. For adults born since 2000, men are just as likely as women to identify with a religion (58 percent v. 57 percent). Much of that, however, has not come from an increase among young adult men but rather larger declines in religiosity among women.

Young adults are still far less likely than older Americans to identify with a religion, pray daily, and say religion is very important to their lives. They are, however, nearly as likely to attend religious services at least monthly.

The research seems to indicate a much smaller percentage of nominal Christians among younger generations.

Among Americans

60 and older, more than 4 in 5 identify with a religion, almost 3 in 5 pray daily, and more than half say religion is very important in their lives. But, around 2 in 5 attend religious services at least monthly.

The gap between identification and practice is much smaller for those 30 and younger: 57 percent identify with a religion, 32 percent pray daily, 33 percent say religion is very important in their lives, and 31 percent attend religious services at least monthly.

In terms of church attendance, young adults are just as likely to show up at least monthly as all but the oldest adults. Among those 18-30, 31 percent regularly attend, compared to 29 percent of those 31-40, 31 percent of those 41-50, 33 percent of those 51-60, and 36 percent of those 61-70. Only those 70 and older (43 percent) have significantly higher attendance rates.

But there is some movement that could give churches hope for shifts among the youngest adults.

## Early indications of a revival?

Pew's findings seem to indicate the youngest adults are slightly more religious than those slightly older than them. This could be signs of a Gen Z religious rebound.

Compared to those born from 1995-2002, those born from 2003-2007 are slightly more likely to identify with a

religion (61 percent v. 55 percent), pray daily (35 percent v. 30 percent), and say religion is very important to their lives (37 percent v. 32 percent). They are much more likely to say they attend religious services at least monthly (41 percent v. 26 percent).

As a word of caution, the youngest age group also includes those adults who may still live at home, so they may be more likely to attend with their parents than the age group directly above them.

Additionally, a similar phenomenon has happened before. In 2007, those born from 1985-1989 were slightly more likely than those born from 1977-1984 to say they regularly attended religious services (52 percent v. 49 percent). By 2014, both age groups had dropped, but the youngest dropped more, so they became less likely to attend at least monthly (40 percent v. 45 percent).

## Warning signs

While there are some areas of hope, the Pew Research data also reveals some areas of concern for churches.

Young people today are generally less religious than young people in 2007 and 2014. They're less likely than 18-24-year-olds in previous generations to identify with a religion, believe in God with absolute certainty and pray daily.

Currently, far more young adults are leaving Christianity than joining

it. Among those 18-34, 5 percent became Christian after having not been raised Christian, while 26 percent left Christianity after having been raised in it. Around 2 in 5 (41 percent) were raised Christian and still are, while 28 percent were not raised Christian and still aren't Christian.

That does, however, represent some improvement over those born in the 1990s. Among 24-34-year-olds, 3 percent converted to Christianity, 31 percent left Christianity, 42 percent remain Christian, and 23 percent have never been Christian.

The youngest adults are slightly more likely to include new Christian converts and less likely to have those who leave the faith.

Again, the findings don't give a simple picture of religion in America or among young adults. There are reasons for optimism and concern.

While continuing to reach out to new young adults, churches should seek to capitalize on the apparent fervor and devotion of those already attending. Congregations may not be filled with young adults, but the ones they have are likely fully invested in faithfully following Jesus.

*This article originally appeared at [research.lifeway.com](https://research.lifeway.com). Aaron Earls is a writer for LifeWay Christian Resources.*

# Wisconsin Supreme Court upholds Catholic charity's religious liberty

By Brandon Porter

MADISON, Wis. (BP) – The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled against the State of Wisconsin on Dec. 15 as the state attorney general tried for a second time to strip a Catholic-based organization from its non-profit status.

The Wisconsin Labor and Industry Review Commission's previously ruled that the Catholic Charities Bureau (CCB) and its four sub-entities, which provide various social services to a diversity of needy communities, do not operate for religious purposes and don't qualify for an exemption from the

state's unemployment insurance program.

The CCB, the social ministry arm of the Diocese of Superior in Wisconsin, challenged the ruling all the way to U.S. Supreme Court.

The High Court ruled unanimously June 5 that the Catholic Charities Bureau (CCB) qualifies for the same tax exemption granted to churches.

However, the state initially refused to abide by the ruling, with the attorney general going so far as to call for eliminating the tax exemption altogether. Becket, the religious liberty firm representing CCB, appealed to the Wisconsin Supreme Court in

October.

"Attorney General Kaul never should have doubled down on punishing churches. The Wisconsin Supreme Court's order today protects not just Catholic Charities, but every faith-based organization that relies on this exemption to serve the public," said Eric Rassbach, vice president and senior counsel at Becket, in a statement Dec. 15. "It turns out that penalizing charities is not a winning legal strategy."

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission joined with 11 faith groups in February to file an amicus brief in the U.S. Supreme Court case.

"In Constitutional law, there are few things as decisive as a unanimous ruling by the United States Supreme Court. The judges in Wisconsin recognized this, ruled against the state's attempted end-around, and set a precedent that state courts everywhere are apt to follow," said ERLC Chief of Staff Miles Mullin.

In its statement Monday, Becket said: "Attorney General Kaul asked Wisconsin's high court to consider axing the exemption entirely – undermining a key religious exemption relied on by faith-based organizations across the state."

Mullin said the decision should bolster confidence in the court's willingness to protect religious liberty.

"This is a good ruling by the Wisconsin Supreme Court and, at a time when trust of our cultural institutions is low, it is encouraging to see that the judicial system worked," he told Baptist Press, "ultimately protecting the right of religious people to participate in a state-offered benefit in a manner consistent with their beliefs."

*Brandon Porter serves as Vice President for Communications at the SBC Executive Committee.*

## GOOD NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATIONS

### NORTHWOODS

For years Grand Rapids Baptist Church has struggled because of the heavy load of a building debt. Last year the Lord provided the funds to pay off that loan, removing that burden. The church expresses gratitude to all who helped them through the years through mission teams, financial support, prayer, and ministry.

Immanuel Baptist Church in Roseau, Minn., had a great Christmas program the evening of Dec. 21 with 86 people in attendance.

## SEA Mission Trip Thailand

July 17 - 31, 2026

[www.mwbc.org/sea](http://www.mwbc.org/sea)



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BLBA: Bay Lakes Baptist Association

GWBA: Greater Wisconsin Baptist Association

LBA: Lakeland Baptist Association

MWBC events are in bold print.

To have your events included, email them to [davidwilliams@compuserve.com](mailto:davidwilliams@compuserve.com).

## FEBRUARY

**5-7 Pastors and Wives Retreat, Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, Wis.**

11-18 TCMBA Mission Trip – North Carolina

## MARCH

**6-7 Empower Conference, Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, Wis.**

15-31 Liberia Mission Trip

## APRIL

3 Good Friday – **MWBC Office Closed**

**10-11 Equip NextGen Conference, Southtown Baptist Church, Bloomington, Minn.**

**24-25 MWBC Executive Board Meeting, Rochester, Minn.**

30 MWBC Lottie Moon Offering Cutoff

## MAY

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

**29 New Pastor Orientation – Rochester, Minn.**

## JUNE

7-10 Southern Baptist Convention – Orlando FL

12-20 Guyana Mission Trip

**TBD Hands of Hope – Location TBD**

30 MWBC Annie Armstrong Offering Cutoff

## JULY

4 Independence Day – **MWBC Office Closed**

**17-31 SEA Mission Trip - Thailand**

NBA: Northwoods Baptist Association

SMBA: Southern Minnesota Baptist Association

TCMBA: Twin Cities Metro Baptist Association

## AUGUST

**14-22 Argentina Mission Trip**

## SEPTEMBER

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

7 Labor Day – **MWBC Office Closed**

**11-12 MWBC Executive Board, Rochester, Minn.**

**18-20 Called Out Youth Conference, Baraboo, Wis.**

## OCTOBER

**22 Church Planter Forum, Trinity Baptist Church, Reedsburg, Wis.**

**23 Pastor's Conference, Trinity Baptist Church, Reedsburg, Wis.**

**23-24 MWBC Annual Meeting, Trinity Baptist Church, Reedsburg, Wis.**

26-27 Missouri Baptist Annual Meeting, St. Charles Convention Center, St. Charles, Mo.

## NOVEMBER

15-17 Baptist General Convention of Texas Annual Meeting, Waco Convention Center, Waco, Texas

**26-27 Thanksgiving Holiday – MWBC Office Closed**

## DECEMBER

**24-31 Christmas/New Year's Holiday – MWBC Office Closed**

# Mission Gifts from the Churches

## MINNESOTA WISCONSIN BAPTIST CONVENTION COOPERATIVE PROGRAM/ STATE MISSION OFFERING

January – December 2025

Cooperative Program Budget 2025 Year to Date	\$641,025.00
Cooperative Program Receipts 2025 Year to Date	\$602,811.81
UNDER Budget Year to Date	\$38,213.19

NAME	CP YTD	SMO 2025
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### BAY LAKES BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Amherst, Amherst Bible	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Appleton, Fox Valley Hmong Baptist	\$500.00	\$0.00
Appleton, Living Water	\$725.13	\$0.00
Appleton, Valley	\$72,974.60	\$4,560.32
Clintonville, First Baptist	\$3,399.07	\$415.00
Green Bay, Graceway Fellowship	\$7,941.19	\$110.00
Green Bay, Highland Crest Baptist	\$49,817.73	\$0.00
Sheboygan, Mapledale Baptist	\$4,114.51	\$346.00
Tilleda, Bethany Baptist	\$8,671.71	\$0.00
Waupaca, Fellowship Baptist	\$2,364.73	\$0.00
<b>BLBA TOTAL</b>	<b>\$151,708.67</b>	<b>\$5,431.32</b>

### LAKELAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bassett, Westosha Community	\$4,163.00	\$0.00
Brookfield, Redemption	\$9,525.00	\$0.00
Brown Deer, Brown Deer Baptist	\$1,500.00	\$1,187.00
Franklin, Emmaus Fellowship	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Kenosha, Amistad Cristiana	\$600.00	\$0.00
Kenosha, Fellowship Baptist	\$8,499.37	\$233.00
Kenosha, Redeemer Parkside	\$5,500.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Grace Point Community	\$719.74	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Hmong First Baptist	\$600.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Iglesia Su Presencia	\$661.56	\$90.00
Milwaukee, Jericho Church Without Walls	\$500.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Korean Baptist	\$900.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Layton Avenue Baptist	\$13,630.81	\$1,215.00
Milwaukee, Mercy Memorial	\$1,050.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Milwaukee Arabic	\$60.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Monumental Baptist	\$1,030.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Mt Horeb Baptist	\$300.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Mt Pilgrim Miss.	\$1,800.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, Northwest Baptist	\$11,250.00	\$0.00
Milwaukee, UFlourish	\$900.00	\$0.00
Mount Pleasant, I.C.A.R.E. Ministries	\$1,226.73	\$100.00
Mount Pleasant, Immanuel	\$9,712.91	\$1,365.00
Pewaukee, Crossroads	\$4,307.44	\$0.00
Pleasant Prairie, Pleasant Prairie Baptist	\$3,007.65	\$300.00
Racine, Hope Community	\$3,939.09	\$0.00
<b>LBA TOTAL</b>	<b>\$86,583.30</b>	<b>\$4,490.00</b>

### NORTHWOODS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bemidji, Ridgewood Baptist	\$1,566.00	\$0.00
Cambridge, Cross Pointe	\$5,500.00	\$0.00
Ely, Berean Baptist	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Grand Rapids, Calvary Pines Baptist	\$2,700.00	\$0.00
Hill City, Hill City Baptist	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
New York Mills, Grace Connection	\$532.00	\$0.00
Pequot Lakes, Eagles Nest	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
Rice Lake, Hope Baptist	\$4,113.00	\$0.00
Roseau, Immanuel Baptist	\$2,690.70	\$0.00
Thief River Falls, Cornerstone	\$1,201.78	\$20.00
Warroad, Westside Baptist	\$2,511.35	\$0.00
<b>NWBA TOTAL</b>	<b>\$23,214.83</b>	<b>\$3,020.00</b>

NAME	CP YTD	SMO 2025
<b>TWIN CITIES METRO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION</b>		
Amery, Journey	\$10,500.00	\$0.00
Bloomington, Hope of Nations Fellowship	\$1,067.70	\$400.00
Bloomington, MN Kangnam Korean Baptist	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Bloomington, Southtown Baptist	\$9,843.53	\$0.00
Brooklyn Park, Ebenezer Community	\$1,800.00	\$0.00
Brooklyn Park, N Center Lao	\$0.00	\$900.00
Brooklyn Park, North Center Baptist	\$3,689.17	\$75.00
Burnsville, Berean Baptist	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
Champlin, Living Hope Church	\$2,400.00	\$0.00
Coon Rapids, First Hmong Baptist	\$3,000.00	\$0.00
Eagan, Eurasia Baptist Church	\$600.00	\$0.00
Eagan, Good News Church	\$4,850.00	\$0.00
Lino Lakes MN, Bethel Moldovian Baptist	\$800.00	\$0.00
Little Canada, Our City-Our Neighborhood	\$100.00	\$0.00
Maple Grove, Northwood	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Maple Grove, Unlock	\$1,100.00	\$0.00
Minneapolis, All Peoples	\$4,320.00	\$0.00
Minneapolis, Foundry College	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Minneapolis, New Hope Baptist	\$500.00	\$0.00
Minnetonka, Redeemer Bible	\$700.00	\$0.00
Monticello, Grace Bible	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
New Hope, Westview	\$1,500.00	\$0.00
New Prague, Calvary	\$22,347.59	\$450.00
North St. Paul - Eternal Life Hmong	\$2,291.63	\$0.00
Richfield, Richfield Bible	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Roseville, Roseville Baptist	\$3,200.00	\$0.00
Roseville, Twin City Hmong	\$1,766.00	\$0.00
Sartell, Faith Journey (Park Fellowship)	\$6,256.83	\$0.00
St. Cloud, Calvary Community	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
St. Louis Park, First Ukrainian Evang.	\$500.00	\$0.00
St. Michael, Northwest Bible	\$2,000.00	\$0.00
St. Paul, Acts2 Midwest	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
St. Paul, Cities	\$10,000.00	\$0.00
St. Paul, Followers Of Christ Hmong	\$12,102.00	\$0.00
St. Paul, Hmong Unity Christian	\$200.00	\$0.00
St. Paul, Iglesia Hispana Betel	\$2,150.00	\$0.00
St. Paul, Vertical Church	\$298.00	\$0.00
Sunfish Lake, Bethel Baptist	\$7,200.00	\$0.00
Sunfish Lake, Vietnamese Baptist	\$720.00	\$0.00
White Bear Lake, Emmaus	\$2,750.00	\$0.00
White Bear Lake, Faith Fellowship	\$2,880.00	\$0.00
<b>TCMBA TOTAL</b>	<b>\$130,032.45</b>	<b>\$1,825.00</b>

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# Mission Gifts from the Churches

NAME	CP YTD	SMO 2025	NAME	CP YTD	SMO 2025			
<b>GREATER WISCONSIN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION</b>								
Beloit, Emmaus Church	\$410.00	\$0.00	Austin, Austin Baptist	\$3,016.40	\$0.00			
Boscobel, Blue River Valley	\$1,153.86	\$100.00	Eyota, Hmong Baptist	\$3,000.00	\$330.00			
Janesville, Resonate	\$11,008.59	\$2,101.00	Mankato, Great Oaks	\$2,075.00	\$0.00			
Kieler, Kieler Community	\$3,265.02	\$0.00	Mankato, Hope Baptist (Gospel Joy)	\$748.00	\$2,815.00			
La Crosse, Crossway Church	\$2,400.00	\$995.00	Marshall, Radiant Life	\$3,039.93	\$0.00			
La Crosse, New Hope	\$600.00	\$0.00	Red Wing, Hiawatha Valley Baptist	\$4,349.50	\$0.00			
Madison, Antioch Fellowship International	\$600.00	\$0.00	Rochester, Chester Woods Community	\$4,707.10	\$0.00			
Madison, Campus Community	\$1,800.00	\$0.00	Rochester, Emmanuel Baptist	\$23,550.86	\$3,765.00			
Madison, Doxa	\$19,440.00	\$0.00	Rochester, Emmanuel en Espanol	\$232.20	\$0.00			
Madison, East Madison Baptist	\$9,142.00	\$2,770.00	Rochester, Redemption City	\$21,882.96	\$0.00			
Madison, Emmanuel	\$981.00	\$0.00	Rochester, Rochester Community Baptist	\$1,000.00	\$0.00			
Madison, Harbor College	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	Sauk Rapids, Harvest en Espanol	\$300.00	\$0.00			
Madison, Hope In Christ Assembly	\$2,689.31	\$690.00	Viola, Viola Bible	\$1,914.35	\$125.00			
Madison, Livingstone Baptist	\$5,509.00	\$200.00	Winona, Cornerstone Community	\$3,850.00	\$0.00			
Madison, Midvale Baptist	\$8,150.56	\$4,461.00	<b>SMNBA Total</b>	<b>\$73,666.30</b>	<b>\$7,035.00</b>			
Madison, Red Village	\$8,500.00	\$0.00	<b>OTHER</b>					
Madison, Shalom Christian Assembly	\$500.00	\$0.00	Eau Claire, Jacob's Well	\$8,500.00	\$0.00			
Milwaukee, Pillar	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	Eau Claire, One in Christ	\$1,233.31	\$0.00			
Minocqua, Cornerstone	\$0.00	\$600.00	<b>OTHER TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,733.31</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>			
Platteville, Rolling Hills	\$6,875.00	\$0.00	<b>MWBC TOTAL RECEIVED</b>					
Reedsburg, Trinity Baptist	\$18,799.92	\$835.00		<b>\$602,811.81</b>	<b>\$36,648.82</b>			
Sparta, Gospel Baptist	\$3,209.73	\$1,552.50	NOTE: No giving received by MWBC-affiliated churches not listed above during stated giving periods					
Sun Prairie, Christ Fellowship	\$1,200.00	\$0.00						
Sun Prairie, Reborn in Christ Baptist	\$1,923.79	\$0.00						
Sun Prairie, Transformation	\$3,658.13	\$0.00						
Sun Prairie, United Hmong	\$980.02	\$0.00						
Waterloo, Centro Biblico La Roca	\$60.00	\$0.00						
Waterloo, Cornerstone Church	\$1,100.00	\$0.00						
WI Dells, Rock of Hope	\$2,400.00	\$0.00						
WI Rapids, Church at Wazeecha	\$4,267.02	\$411.00						
WI Rapids, First Baptist	\$650.00	\$132.00						
<b>GWBA Total</b>	<b>\$125,472.95</b>	<b>\$14,847.50</b>						

## FUTURE

*continued from page three*

ture to be strongest. The strategic planning team will use this to present a comprehensive action plan at the April Executive Board meeting. I look forward to hearing your perspective as we strengthen this framework for the future.

May God be honored as we ask Him to help us number our days.

*Trey Turner is executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.*

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## MORAL

*continued from page three*

name them. Stop for a minute and see if you can recall all ten of the commandments. Can our children or grandchildren quote them? If we don't know the Ten Commandments, how can they guide us in our values and action?

Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not

the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-19). He went on to apply the commandments at a deeper level than anyone imagined.

The first four of the

Ten Commandments tell us how to have a healthy relationship with God. The next six tell us how to have healthy relationships with each other.

Zhao Xiao, a leading economist in China, researched America's secret to prosperity. He concluded, "The key to America's commercial success is not its natural resources, its financial system or its technology, but its churches. . . . The market economy is efficient because it discourages idleness, but it can also encourage people to lie and injure

others. It thus needs a moral underpinning." Xiao's conclusions are remarkably similar to Alexis de Tocqueville's in 1840. Democracy survives and thrives where moral values prevail.

*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**

# A GIFTED RETREAT FOR PASTORS AND WIVES 2026

## galatians 6:6 Retreat for Couples in Ministry

A GIFT FROM THE GREAT COMMANDMENT NETWORK

SAVE THE DATE:

Thursday - Saturday, **February 5-7, 2026**

RETREAT LOCATION:

Green Lake Conference Center, W2511  
State Rd. 23, Green Lake, WI 54941

Register Early!

To register:

<http://www.mwbc.org/retreat>

### RETREAT SCHEDULE:

#### DAY 1:

3:00 - 4:00 PM - REGISTRATION  
4:00 - 9:00 PM - GENERAL SESSIONS AND  
DINNER

#### DAY 2:

9:00 AM - 7:00 PM - GENERAL SESSIONS,  
LUNCH, DINNER, AND FREE TIME

#### DAY 3:

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM GENERAL SESSIONS  
AND DISMISS (LUNCH IS NOT PROVIDED ON  
DAY 3 TO ACCOMMODATE VARYING  
DEPARTURE TIMES.)