

Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist

Volume 41, Number 2

March 2026

Table of Contents

- 1 Federal Charges
- 1 Send Network
- 1 Equip 2026
- 2 Pastors and Wives Retreat Photos
- 3 Leaders reflect on protest
- 3 Cities Church addresses protest
- 3 Protesting has a place
- 4 Trey Turner: Perspectives
- 4 Bill Tinsley: Reflections
- 5 Na Herr: Missions
- 5 Clint Calvert: Leadership
- 6 Bob Smith: Student Ministries
- 7 Lifeway Study
- 8 Good News from the Associations
- 9 Calendar of events
- 10 National Prayer Breakfast
- 11 Mission gifts from the churches
- 12 Annie Armstrong

39 face federal charges after Cities Church incident

St. Paul, Minn. — With 30 new indictments announced on Feb. 27, there are now 39 persons charged with disrupting a St. Paul, Minn., church service.

The incident occurred on Sunday, Jan. 18, at Cities Church as a group protesting tactics of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers decided to carry their demonstration into the sanctuary during morning worship.

The federal indictment characterized the protest as a “coordinated takeover-style attack” that used “oppression, intimidation, threats, interference, and physical obstruction” to force the church to stop their worship service. Defendants were charged with two federal crimes: conspiracy against the right of religious freedom at a place of worship

and interfering with the exercise of the right of religious freedom.

“YOU CANNOT ATTACK A HOUSE OF WORSHIP,” U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi wrote in a post. “If you do so, you cannot hide from us — we will find you, arrest you, and prosecute you. This Department of Justice STANDS for Christians and all Americans of faith.”

Bondi has described religious freedom as a “sacred right” and the “cornerstone of our American memory,” emphasizing that the Department of Justice (DOJ) will aggressively prosecute anyone who



Cities Church, part of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention family, was the scene of a Sunday morning demonstration which prevented the congregants from finishing their worship service.

disrupts church services or targets houses of worship. She described the incident at Cities Church as “horrific” and “shameful,” noting that congregants, including children, were “terrorized.”

The initial nine arrests included: Don Lemon and Georgia Fort, independent journalists who have stated they were present only in their professional capacity as

See **CHARGES** page 6

Register now for Equip

Bloomington, Minn. — Church leaders and volunteers who work with children and youth should register now for the Apr. 10-11 Equip NextGen Ministry Conference at Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington, Minn.

The registration fee for the two-day event is \$39 until Mar. 15 but on that day it goes up to

\$49. To encourage pastors to attend, a church’s senior pastor may attend for free as long as someone else from his church is a paid registrant. For the pastor’s discount code, contact Penny Reedy, Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention’s Kid Ministry leader, (218) 340-0862.

See **EQUIP** page 6

Send Network events coming to Wisconsin

Two Send Network events will take place in Wisconsin this spring.

Graceway Fellowship in Green Bay, Wis., will host a Sending Lab on Saturday, Mar. 14.

The one-day workshop helps church leaders develop a vision and plan for leading their church to send our church planters to start new work.

It’s a collaborative experience that connects leaders of different churches as they seek to identify their next steps for finding, developing, and sending church planters.

The day begins at 8:30 a.m. with refreshments and networking followed by registration and check-in at 9 a.m. The program starts at 9:30 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m.

Click [here](#) to register.

Uflourish Church in Milwaukee, Wis., will host a Residency Builder on Monday, May 18 through Tuesday, May 19.

This two-day workshop is designed to help pastors and leaders build an intentional process for training qualified leaders to be church planters. It helps leaders dis-

See **SEND** page 7

Scenes from the 2026 Pastors and Wives Retreat



Minnesota leaders reflect on church protest

By Lonnie Wilkey

Rochester, Minn. (BP) – In the aftermath of the disruption by Immigration and Customs Enforcement protesters of a Southern Baptist worship service on Jan. 18, leaders in the Minnesota–Wisconsin Baptist Convention are asking for prayer and support for the ethnic churches in the two states.

Between 30–40 protesters interrupted the worship service of Cities Church in St. Paul, Minn., to denounce the federal government’s immigration enforcement. One of the church’s staff pastors serves as a field office director for ICE.

The MWBC, with offices in Rochester,

Minn., is comprised of 200 churches and about two-thirds of those are ethnic congregations, said Trey Turner, MWBC executive director.

“There is some fear among our ethnic congregations,” Turner acknowledged. He noted that there are members and pastors of ethnic congregations who are working through the process of gaining citizenship or extending work visas.

Turner said the turmoil in the state has caused some Hispanic congregations to stop meeting. “They are feeling pressure of getting caught up in what’s happening in our state. . . . They don’t want to stick their

heads up and draw attention to themselves and neither do other ethnic congregations such as the Hmong, Liberian and others. Everybody is feeling that kind of pressure.”

Regional impact

The impact is not confined simply to the Minneapolis–St. Paul area or for Hispanics, Turner said. He observed that people across Minnesota and in Wisconsin share those fears as well.

Turner shared the story of a non-Hispanic pastor who was detained by ICE on Jan. 20. Though he was going through proper channels, Turner said,

See **REFLECT** page 6

Cities Church leaders address worship disruption

St. Paul, Minn. (BP) – Leaders of Cities Church released a statement Jan. 20 addressing what they called the “shameful, unlawful conduct” of protestors that disrupted their church service Sunday, Jan. 18.

The protestors “accosted members of our congregation, frightened children, and created a scene marked by intimidation and threat,” the statement said.

“Invading a church service to disrupt the worship of Jesus – or any other act of worship – is protected by neither the Christian Scriptures nor the laws of this nation.”

Though the church’s statement uses “we” in

several places, Pastor Jonathan Parnell’s is the only name listed on it. Parnell, who was leading the worship service, can be seen on now-viral videos attempting to regain order after protestors began chanting loudly and marching around the sanctuary.

In a separate post, Parnell wrote about how he used 1 Peter 4 to address Sunday’s events with his family. Verse 12 admonishes Christians not to be surprised when fiery trials come.

“I told them all of this is a trial, and we are tempted to be surprised,” Parnell wrote. “But, what does God say in verse 13?” Verse 13 calls believers to

rejoice amid such trials because “the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”

“[My children] recalled, in an instant, our church’s response, the hugs and tears and palpable unity,” he wrote. “Our love for one another truly shone through. . . .

“‘This is for God’s glory,’ I told them, ‘in the way of Jesus.’”

In both pieces, Parnell shared the gospel and the mission of Cities Church while also calling on law enforcement to protect the rights of Christians.

“Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, lived, died and rose again for

See **CITIES** page 9

Protesting has its place, but it’s not inside churches

Baptist Press, reprinted from Kentucky Today

Americans cherish the right to protest. It is woven into the fabric of our democracy and protected by the Constitution. But that right does not extend to barging into a church during worship, shouting down a congregation and traumatizing families gathered in prayer.

What happened Jan. 18 at Cities Church in St. Paul, Minn., was not peaceful protest. It was intimidation — pure and simple.

During Sunday morning worship service, protestors forced their way into the sanctuary, blowing whistles, shouting and deliberately disrupting the service. According to reports, the protest was aimed at a pastor, David Easterwood, who also serves as an ICE field office director. Whatever one’s views on immigration policy or federal enforcement operations, storming into a church service is an indefensible tactic that violates both the law and basic standards of human decency.

Churches are not public sidewalks. They are private property and sacred spaces, protected not only by property law but by the First Amendment’s guarantee of the free exercise of religion. Worshipers have just as much constitutional right to gather in peace as protestors have to assemble in public forums.

Some have tried to frame this incident as an act of free speech. It was not. Trespassing, willful disruption and harassment are not protected speech. As North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell rightly said, “No cause — political or otherwise — justifies the desecration of a sacred space or the intimidation and trauma inflicted on families gathered peacefully in the house of God.”

It is especially troubling that a media figure appeared to suggest that protestors had a constitutional right to interrupt worship. That assertion reflects a dangerous misunderstanding of civil liberties. The First Amendment does not grant anyone the right to silence others or to hijack private religious services for political theater.

Tensions in Minneapolis are undeniably high following recent law enforcement actions related to immigration enforcement.

See **PROTEST** page 9

Two strong hands: conviction and cooperation

There is something wonderful that happens when people cling to their beliefs while reaching out to each other with a shared purpose.

Our ability to keep the Cooperative Program has amazed Southern Baptist leaders for years. This is because there is always a pull between conviction

and cooperation. Either the pull of doctrine wants to make demands of cooperation, or cooperation asks us to loosen our beliefs. That has happened repeatedly in Baptist life. Conviction and cooperation are not a tension to be fixed. In fact, they are

together the very drive of what makes us cooperative Southern Baptists. We must be committed to both.

Southern Baptists have never been short on conviction. The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 did not come through compromise, but through clarity. It was a careful, prayerful statement of

what Southern Baptists settled through years of struggle. The authority of Scripture. The exclusivity of Christ. The dignity of every human soul. These are not negotiable footnotes; they are essential.

Left to itself, conviction alone can draw people into isolation. It can become a wall rather than a bridge. But the power of God's Word is life-giving. Biblical conviction actually causes a reflex of community. As John writes in 1 John 1:3, "What we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

On the other hand, cooperation without conviction has a short

shelf life. The Scripture we hold fast to is based on the Lord's own revelation of Himself. The power of the Book is the Person behind it. Our cooperation must be Spirit-energized, not just cooperation for its own sake. Jesus warned us in Matthew 7:22 that religious activity—even doing things "in His name"—is hollow if it isn't rooted in a life-changing relationship with Him. In the same way, our work together is only powerful when it flows from the Truth of the Gospel.

When Southern Baptist churches link arms through the Cooperative Program, something extraordinary happens. A small congregation in rural Minnesota or Wisconsin partners with people they may never

meet: church planters in British Columbia, missionaries along the Amazon, and seminary students preparing for the future. Through these two strong hands of conviction and cooperation, our reach becomes far greater than any single church could manage on its own.

This is the quiet genius of what we have built together. It is not uniformity, but unity. At its best, it does not demand that we are all the same, but that we share the same mission. Conviction tells us why we go. Cooperation determines how far we reach. Together, they have always been greater than either one alone.

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



Perspectives
Trey Turner

The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist:

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

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

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

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

Trey Turner
Executive Director
turner@mwbc.org
519 16th St. SE
Rochester, MN
55904

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

Rest for the weary: the forgotten commandment

Somewhere along the way we reduced the ten commandments to nine.

A half-century ago, businesses were closed on Sunday and sporting events recognized Sunday as a day for worship. All that has changed. Today our calendars are filled up to a 24/7 frenzy. We effectively eliminated the fourth commandment as irrelevant and archaic: "Remember the Sabbath

day to keep it holy."

A report from the American Psychological Association stated, "Chronic stress is increasingly eating away at our overall well-being." ... "The psychological and physical toll of stress in America will undoubtedly continue to snowball if something doesn't change."



Reflections
Bill Tinsley

and physical toll of stress in America will undoubtedly continue to snowball if something doesn't change."

In his book, *Living the Sabbath, Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight*, Norman

Wirzba writes, "Put simply, Sabbath discipline introduces us to God's own ways of joy and delight. . . . When our work and our play, our exertion and our rest flow seamlessly from this deep desire to give thanks to God, the totality of our living – cooking, eating, cleaning, preaching, parenting, building, repairing, healing, creating – becomes one sustained and ever-expanding act of worship."

When Jesus said that man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath was made for man, he affirmed the need for the Sabbath in our lives.

He underscored the importance of the Sabbath to all of us for mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health.

In 1924 Scotland's Eric Liddell, the fastest runner in the world, refused to compete at the Olympics on the Lord's Day. When the King of England commanded him to run for his country on Sunday, Liddell respectfully replied he had a higher king. The Academy Award winning movie, *Chariots of Fire* portrays Liddell reading Isaiah 40:31 to a congregation on Sunday while young

Theological education for all

In January, I attended a missions partnership conference that hosted International Mission Board team leaders from several regions of the world. The leaders were asked what their primary goal was for their region. They all agreed that theological education and leadership training for national pastors and



Missions
Na Herr

church leaders were top priorities.

In my own missions experience, I would agree with this assessment. Often, we spend significant resources on evangelism to get people in the church. But when they arrive, we have nothing to show for it except a scripted Sunday service. What can we do to move from

evangelism to deeper discipleship in our churches and missions programs?

Discipleship is too broad a topic to cover in this column, but perhaps I can bring attention to the need for more and better access to theological education. Nowadays, anyone can go on the internet and find a host of theological resources, including books, articles, and videos. However, like the problem with internet search engines, there is just simply too much information out there. Studies have shown that

information overload can lead to strain and burnout.

Nothing beats having a good teacher to make sense of all the information. This is why seminaries play such a vital role in preparing pastors and ministry leaders for the church. But what about someone who lives in a country with little or no access to seminary training?

I would like to propose building a theological education curriculum that is online-based but people-focused. Using the latest technology, it is now possible

to connect great Bible teachers to students from all over the world who are desperate for training. Do you have a passion for teaching and discipling new believers? You are invited to participate in a pilot program that I am building to train believers in restricted access countries. Send me an email or give me a call, and I would love to connect with you.

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

Time for me to leave

I woke up early one morning at a hotel in Pewaukee, Wis., after attending the Lakeland Baptist Association's winter meeting. As I looked around the room to get my bearings, I could see the clock on the night stand, the clock on the microwave oven, and the time on my watch. None of these times were the same. In fact, they were different by ten and even fifteen minutes. No wonder I was so groggy and disoriented. It was difficult to know the correct time with all these conflicting inputs. Last September, I retired from the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention staff to



Leadership
Clint Calvert

start a new ministry called 2nd Act Career Services. I agreed to be a one-day-a-week consultant to the MWBC to provide some continuity in Dr. Trey Turner's first year as our executive director. I

also continued to supervise clinical pastoral education which often takes one day a week of administration. I did not foresee then how quickly 2nd Act would grow from a one-person ministry to a team of three staff members, two contractors, and a tripling of our budget.

Trying to maintain various vocational identities all at the same time (MWBC consultant, CPE educator, and

2nd Act founder) was like living in a room with three different clocks. I was too disoriented to be effectively focused. I was laying claim to a convergent role without letting go of the previous roles that informed my identity.

I learned the painful truth about transitions which author William Bridges characterized in three phases as dying, the neutral zone, and rebirth. I was starting a new role as a coach for adults in career transitions and trying to "cheat death" by holding onto roles that needed to die.

So, having made that realization, I have resigned as an MWBC consultant effective March 9 and as a CPE Educator as of April 26.

An amazing thing happens when you let your old roles die. You can focus on your new role. You can de-clutter your spaces to prioritize what you need to now use to succeed. You discover additional capacity and margin that are necessary to breathe in the new role.

The great news about transitions is that even though the roles are over, the relationships remain. If you see me at an MWBC event, I

am there to continue our friendship and ministry partnership.

Legendary American comedian and master of the "one-liner," Steven Wright famously said, "Don't ever get your speedometer confused with your clock, like I did once. Because the faster you go, the later you think you are." I am not sure I know what that means, but it is the next mystery I will tackle in my role at 2nd Act.

Clint Calvert is, for a few more days, leadership development consultant for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

Minnesota-Wisconsin
Baptist

Better Together

In January I had the privilege of being part of a group of men and women who lead collegiate ministry in the Emerging Regions (Northeast, Midwest, Northwest and Canada). Together we shared stories of where God is working as well as some of the challenges that each of us face.

Robbie Nutter of the Kansas-Nebraska Baptist Convention shared some of the challenges of reaching Generation Z:

- Students don't trust us.

- They don't just need a sermon, they need a friend.



Student Ministries

Bob Smith

- Biblical illiteracy is rampant with both those who were raised in the church and those who were not.

- There are new strongholds, loneliness is epidemic.

- The reality of broken families calls us to step into the void.

- Recognize and embrace your limitations.

- Invest in the few. Who is in your "circle of three"?

Mark Robinson, state collegiate leader of the

Louisiana Baptist Convention, spoke about what it means to be "a winner" in the Christian life. He began by reminding us about the importance of our call to ministry. "Your call is the anchor that steadies you in the midst of the storm."

A winner, he said, is someone who can be trusted with a little, who is a completer of tasks, and who walks alongside of those who are facing adversity.

I was reminded that we are not alone.

Ministry partnerships extend our reach.

We are better together.

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



FREEWILL



CREATE A WILL FOR FREE

FreeWill's will-writing tool is an online service that allows anyone to write a legally valid will in under 25 minutes, for free!



SUPPORT YOUR CHURCH

Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Foundation has partnered with FreeWill to give every congregation member across the region the ability to give back to their church.

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

CHARGES

continued from page one

reporters; Nekima Levy Armstrong, a prominent Minneapolis civil rights activist and attorney; and Trahern Crews, lead organizer of Black Lives Matter Minnesota.

The protestors targeted Cities Church because they had learned that one of its pastors, David Easterwood, is the acting director of the local ICE field office.

Doug Wardlow, the lawyer representing Cities Church, celebrated the news of additional arrests, saying it "sends a clear message: houses of worship are off limits for those who would use chaos and intimidation to advance a political agenda." In the statement posted to social media, Wardlow said the protest "placed congregants, including children, in fear for their

lives."

The demonstration was one of many carried out in January and February to protest ICE's Operation Metro Surge in which as many as 3,000 federal agents were hunting and arresting undocumented immigrants in the area. There were several clashes between demonstrators and officers. In separate incidents in Minneapolis, ICE agents fatally shot two 37-year-old protestors – Renee Good on Jan. 7 and Alex Pretti on Jan. 24.

Nationwide demonstrations erupted in response to the ICE operation and especially the fatal shootings, followed by a change in Operation Metro Surge's leadership and the eventual wind-down of the immigration enforcement operation.

Back to the beginning

EQUIP

continued from page one

The conference is "a time of encouragement, equipping, community and fun," according to the event's promotion piece.

Guest speakers this year are Chuck Peters, Lifeway's director of NextGen Ministry, and Trey Turner, MWBC executive director.

Friday sessions are from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. and includes dinner. Saturday sessions are from 8:30 a.m. until noon.

There will be a preview of Lifeway's 2026 Vacation Bible School curriculum: Illumination Station.

Click [here](#) to register.

Back to the beginning

REST

continued from page four

men stumble and fall on the mud-splattered track. "Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not faint." The next week, Liddell ran the 400 meter, a race for which he had not trained, won the gold and set a new world record.

Sabbath requires time for rest, silence, solitude and worship, but it is more than a day of rest. It is a way of life that is filled with wonder, worship, awe and delight. When Jesus declared

himself the Lord of the Sabbath, he offered to us a better way. He said, "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest to your souls."

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

Most churchgoers regularly confess sin

By Aaron Earles
Lifeway Christian Resources

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP) — Most churchgoers try to avoid sin before it happens and seek to confess it afterward. For many, confession is a regular part of their faith.

The joint action of obeying God and denying self is one of eight signposts that seek to measure characteristics evident in believers progressing in spiritual maturity in Lifeway Research's State of Discipleship study. On a scale of 0 to 100, the average U.S. Protestant churchgoer scores 75.1 on this signpost, ranking it second.

As part of that attribute, most churchgoers say they confess their sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness at least a few times a week.

More than 2 in 5 (44 percent) confess to God every day, while a quarter (26 percent) do so a few times a week. Fewer say they ask for forgiveness once a week (13 percent), a few times a month (8 percent) or once a month (4 percent). Some churchgoers say they rarely or never confess sins (4 percent).

In a 2012 Lifeway Research study, 39 percent of Protestant churchgoers confessed their sins to God and asked for forgiveness every day, 27 percent

did so a few times a week, 27 percent confessed between once a week and once a month and eight percent said it happened rarely or never.

"The confession of sins to God is counter-cultural," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. "Today, many people in America want to set their own moral compass, but we see large numbers of churchgoers agreeing with God that they crossed His moral boundaries and acknowledge His authority in their lives."

Attitude toward sin

When it comes to sin, most U.S. Protestant churchgoers try to avoid possible temptations but are ready to confess mistakes to God and turn from them moving forward.

Three in 4 (75 percent) say they try to avoid situations in which they might be tempted to think or do immoral things, including 35 percent who strongly agree and 39 percent who somewhat agree. One in 10 (10 percent) disagree, while 15 percent neither agree nor disagree.

Those levels have remained consistent for more than a decade. In a 2019 Lifeway Research study, 77 percent said they worked to avoid tempting situations, and 73 percent said so in 2012.

"It is likely that

people who have no intention of avoiding immoral temptations are less inclined to attend or continue attending church," said McConnell. "This consistent high level of trying to avoid temptation among churchgoers fits with a proactive posture of being engaged in the tenets of their faith."

If they are convinced of sin in their lives, 4 in 5 U.S. Protestant churchgoers (80 percent) readily confess it to God as sin, with 45 percent strongly agreeing. Just 7 percent disagree, and 13 percent say neither.

After they have confessed sins to God, 7 in 10 (70 percent) say they turn from them, including 30 percent who strongly agree. Around one in ten disagree (9 percent), while around twice as many (21 percent) neither agree nor disagree.

Beyond even their actions, 82 percent of churchgoers say they take steps to fix their attitude when they realize it doesn't please God, including 40 percent who strongly agree and 43 percent who somewhat agree. Only 4 percent disagree, and 13 percent say neither. In 2012, 81 percent agreed and 4 percent disagreed.

"These questions on obedience among churchgoers reflect widespread desire to obey God but also acknowledge that they

regularly have sins to confess. Churchgoers are not perfect people, but most are actively confronting these shortcomings," said McConnell.

Life of obedience

While confession and avoiding temptations are common, U.S. Protestant churchgoers may be slightly less likely to say they are taking proactive or preparatory steps to follow Jesus.

Almost three in five (57 percent) say they sacrifice their goals to please and honor Jesus, with 23 percent strongly agreeing and 34 percent somewhat agreeing. Close to one in six (16 percent) disagree, while more than a quarter (27 percent) say neither.

More churchgoers (78 percent) are ready to work in any job God wants them to have, including 42 percent who strongly agree and 36 percent who somewhat agree. Few (6 percent) disagree, and 16 percent neither agree nor disagree.

"Obeying God may require an individual to give up their own desires or goals. While a majority of churchgo-

ers agree they are good with this exchange, this denial of self is the weakest response in this signpost, with fewer than one in four completely on board with such sacrifice," said McConnell.

When considering their life, more than two in three (68 percent) churchgoers say they live as if they exist to praise and glorify God, with 32 percent strongly agreeing and 36 percent somewhat agreeing. One in 10 (11 percent) disagree and twice as many (22 percent) say neither. In 2019, 66 percent agreed, 10 percent disagreed and 24 percent weren't sure.

"For churchgoers, obeying and wanting to quickly return to obedience are related to finding meaning in glorifying God," said McConnell. "The Bible says obeying God brings Him glory. While there is room for two in three churchgoers to grow in this lifestyle, most acknowledge this purpose in their lives."

For more information, view the report and visit LifewayResearch.com/Discipleship.

SEND

continued from page one

cover and develop their unique plan for equipping potential planters. Participants leave the Residency Builder with a framework and the beginning steps to im-

plement a residency in their church.

The event begins with an 11:30 a.m. lunch on Monday and ends at 2 p.m. on Tuesday.

Click [here](#) to register.

Back to the beginning

GOOD NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATIONS

Northwoods Baptist Association will host a Residency Builder event Saturday, Mar. 21, at Ridgewood Baptist Church in Bemidji. This is in cooperation with North American Mission Board's SEND Network and is open to all Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Association church leaders. For further information, contact Tom Johnston, NWBA assistant associational missionary, at tjohnston@mbts.edu.

"SEND Strategist Tony Antivero, Associational Missionary Aaron Satchwill, and I have been strategizing as to how to inspire church planters and invigorate leadership training in NWBA," Johnston said. "Tony is keen to recruit and train church planters in the rural areas of Minnesota. Important to this process is the process of coaching and mentoring for successful church planting. The upcoming Residency Builder in the NWBA will fulfill this purpose."



Members of Livingstone Baptist Church in Madison, Wis., celebrate the Jan. 25 baptisms of David and Young Hee Kim (at front). The couple has been called to plant Abide Church in Milwaukee, near the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee campus. Mark Millman (far right), associational missions strategist for the **Greater Wisconsin Baptist Association**, was on hand to baptize the Kims, who are coming from a Presbyterian background. They will go through church planter assessment Apr. 27-28 in the Twin Cities. Peter Ko is pastor of Livingstone, the sending church.

REFLECT

continued from page three

the judge canceled his immigration meeting. ICE detained him and began the deportation process for missing that meeting. The rest of the family has been instructed to report for their deportation also, Turner said.

Fear within congregations

Chris Reinertson, senior pastor of Southtown Baptist Church in Bloomington and director of missions for the Twin Cities Metro Baptist Association, is also among those helping the pastor and his family.

Both men asked for prayer for the pastor and his family who are still grieving the death of an adult son only three months ago.

Reinertson agreed with Turner that there is fear within some ethnic congregations in

the community because there have been people taken and deported, but it has not happened in his congregation which includes members from 15 countries.

In both his church and the association, Reinertson has been encouraging the people to:

- Live without fear because the Prince of Peace lives in them.
- Pray for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Pray for all people in every category because God loves the world (John 3:16).
- Be good citizens and cooperate by having our documents (Rom. 13).
- Help each person in their specific circumstance because each situation is different.

Reinertson admits there is tension between John 3:16 and Romans 13 but says the two verses complement each other.

Turner acknowledged that the incident at Cities Church has created a demand for the convention to also seek ways to help their ethnic congregations. "It's time to show that we are united and that we have each other's backs, caring for churches like Cities and expressing care for our ethnic churches," he said.

Turner cited Emmanuel Baptist Church in Rochester as a congregation that is doing something tangible. Emmanuel has two ethnic congregations including a Hispanic congregation that has stopped meeting for now. Emmanuel members have collected a special offering and are taking an aggressive approach to take care of the pastors and their families along with members of the Hispanic congregation as their pastor reports needs.

Turner said the convention will encourage its churches "to provide pastoral care to our immigrant communities with much grace. The MWBC will help equip those churches providing that care where they need help. We remain committed to the sanctity of public worship times and will continue to advocate for the right of all congregations to meet in peace."

The MWBC leader also asked Southern Baptists across the nation to pray for "peace within our communities and for the safety of every pastor and parishioner."

Pray for pastors, churches

Reinertson reiterated the need for prayer for the churches and their members and also the pastors who are trying to help their congregants who are still working to secure their citizenship through the legal system.

He added that he welcomes pastors from across the country who would like to team up with an ethnic pastor in the city to provide encouragement and support. Anyone interested in participating may contact him at TCMBA.sbc@gmail.com.

Back to the beginning

mwbc.org

PROTEST

continued from page three

Citizens have every right to express anger, fear, or disagreement with government policy. But targeting churches — places where people seek refuge, comfort, and spiritual guidance — crosses a line that should never be blurred.

Attorney General Pam Bondi and the Department of Justice have indicated they are reviewing whether federal laws, including the FACE Act, were violated. That review is appropriate. But legal consequences alone

are not enough. State and local leaders must also speak clearly and forcefully: churches must be protected, and worship must remain free from political coercion.

This is not a partisan issue. It is a civil society issue.

If protesters can storm a church today because they dislike a pastor's job, what prevents similar mobs from invading synagogues, mosques, or community centers tomorrow over other political disagreements? Once we normalize intimidation in sacred spaces, no house of

worship remains safe.

Protest has power when it appeals to conscience, not when it bullies the innocent. True advocates for justice do not need to shout down hymn singing to make their point.

The message should be unambiguous: debate policies, challenge leaders, march in public spaces — but leave worship alone. A society that cannot protect the quiet moments of prayer and reflection risks losing far more than political arguments. It risks losing its moral compass.

Back to the beginning

CITIES

continued from page three

the rescue of all who put their faith in him," he wrote in the first piece. "He offers a love that transcends cultures, borders, policies, and politics. As those who have been loved and rescued by him, we will not shrink from worshiping Jesus, nor will we stop 'teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus

is the Messiah' (Acts 5:42).

"Church buildings are meant to be places of peace and solace, where worshipers can hear and live out this message," he continued. "We therefore call on local, state, and national leaders to protect this fundamental right. We are evaluating next steps with our legal counsel."

Back to the beginning



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.

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**

Tennessee governor shares story of personal tragedy at National Prayer Breakfast

By Laura Erlanson

WASHINGTON (BP) – Attendees at the 74th annual National Prayer Breakfast in Washington Feb. 5 heard a moving address on persevering through tragedy and remembering the brevity of life from keynote speaker Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee.

Lee's address followed brief remarks from Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, who both spoke of God's sovereign hand on the nation.

President Donald Trump also gave a long, seemingly off-the-cuff speech in which he called out political enemies but also spoke of the nation's religious heritage and his efforts to secure religious liberty in the U.S. and around the world.

Trump also addressed the recent disruption by protestors at Cities Church in St. Paul, Minn., calling the incident a "trampling" of the First Amendment and commending Attorney General Pam Bondi for overseeing the arrest of nine individuals involved.

Gov. Lee had not been the scheduled speaker for the breakfast, having only learned the day before that he would be needed. He used the unexpected opportunity to tell the story of how tragedy changed his life and his faith.

"I heard it said that ... there are days in our lives that can be described by a simple sentence," Lee said.

"Then there's other days that chapters are written about."

A day in late July 2000 was one in which "chapters were written in the story of my life," Lee said. It was the day his first wife was killed in an accident at their home.

"I lived a life most men dream of living," Lee said. "Beautiful wife, beautiful kids, beautiful home, sprawling farm, prosperous business, loved God with all my heart.

"On that July afternoon, I drove home from work, and I saw my son fishing and my other son playing, and my daughter was on a mission trip. And my 4-year-old was ... on a horse with my wife. And I drove up the drive of my home and thought about the fact that I must be the most blessed man ever."

A few minutes later, Lee's idyllic life was shattered when he heard his 4-year-old screaming and ran to find his wife lifeless on the ground.

"That day in my life, my life took a very dark turn," Lee said.

In the days that followed, Lee's family was consumed by grief. His eldest daughter attempted to take her own life. She survived "miraculously," Lee said, but the trauma for the family was "overwhelming." His business began to fail.

A few months after his wife's death, Lee was sitting in the family burial grounds on his property, awaiting the

delivery of the stone marker for his wife's grave. The men showed up, erected the monument and left.

"On the bottom (of the marker) was the day she was born and the day she died," he recalled. "And I stood there looking at this, and it was very surreal. It is funny, isn't it? How life will take you places and you will find yourself in a place you thought you might never be.

"I knew that I would have a tombstone right there beside her. Might be 40 days, might be 40 years. And as I stood there contemplating that ... I had this thought that went through my brain – I wonder what she would say to me standing right here. I wonder what she's doing. I know she's still alive, more alive than ever.

"And then the thought came to me – what she would say is what God would say and is saying: There are very few things in life that matter, and we should be about them."

As he left her grave that day, Lee said, he didn't know what the future would hold, but he knew that God would show him how to move forward. The experience caused his faith to grow in new ways.

"[God] became real to me like He had never been," Lee said. "Oh, I had known Him, but now I began to know Him in a way that I'd never known Him before. He became a healer and a redeemer and a dispenser of hope.



Governor Bill Lee speaking at the National Prayer Breakfast.

The most tragic days of my life were strangely becoming the most transformational days of my life."

The family made a concerted effort to "get out of ourselves," Lee said, going on trips to Haiti, Mexico, Uganda and South Sudan to build homes and work in orphanages and refugee camps.

Lee became involved in an inner-city program for at-risk youth and then education reform and soon public policy surrounding education. Those efforts eventually led to his decision to run for governor.

"My life began to flourish," he said. "My business was strong again. My family was restored. I met and married the most remarkable woman in the world. And ... the story of my life was again, filled with pages of certainty and a belief in God's goodness that was forged not only in prosperity, but through adversity and prosperity."

Lee said he has faced the opportunities of the governorship "as a more purposeful and meaningful person than I ever was before."

Things like standing with Tennesseans after

natural disasters, attending adoption ceremonies for foster families and even pardoning criminals are constant reminders of God's work in his life.

Lee closed with the story of his recent pardon of country music star Jelly Roll, who, unbeknownst to Lee, had been in the audience in 2008 when Lee gave a speech to prisoners.

"In 2008, you were not the governor, and I was not Jelly Roll," the musician and outspoken Christian told him. "And here we are, 17 years later."

Jelly Roll's story served to remind Lee of the thought he had at his wife's grave 25 years earlier.

"There are very few things in life that matter and we should be about them," Lee said.

"The pardons that I give as governor are earthly pardons," he said. "I have a belief that within every human being, there's this innate sense that we all need a pardon. And there is only one who can grant that pardon, and He has to be asked. And His name is Jesus. And I, for one, am glad that He summonsed me and I asked Him, and He pardoned me forever."

Mission Gifts from the Churches

MINNESOTA WISCONSIN BAPTIST CONVENTION COOPERATIVE PROGRAM/ STATE MISSION OFFERING

January – February 2026

Cooperative Program Budget 2026 Year to Date	\$102,720.00
Cooperative Program Receipts 2026 Year to Date	\$135,050.23
Over Budget Year to Date	\$32,330.23

NAME	CP YTD
------	--------

BAY LAKES BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Amherst, Amherst Bible	\$40.00
Appleton, Living Water	\$977.07
Appleton, Valley	\$14,145.73
Clintonville, First Baptist	\$503.68
Green Bay, Graceway Fellowship	\$845.25
Green Bay, Highland Crest Baptist	\$11,661.37
Sheboygan, Mapledale Baptist	\$651.12
Tilleda, Bethany Baptist	\$227.50
Waupaca, Fellowship Baptist	\$465.86
BLBA TOTAL	\$29,517.58

LAKELAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bassett, Westosha Community	\$283.00
Brookfield, Redemption	\$1,000.00
Franklin, Emmaus Fellowship	\$1,200.00
Kenosha, Fellowship Baptist	\$3,119.54
Milwaukee, Grace Point Community	\$862.19
Milwaukee, Hmong First Baptist	\$700.00
Milwaukee, Iglesia Su Presencia	\$82.47
Milwaukee, Korean Baptist	\$800.00
Milwaukee, Layton Avenue Baptist	\$2,573.03
Milwaukee, Mercy Memorial	\$300.00
Milwaukee, Monumental Baptist	\$250.00
Milwaukee, Mt Horeb Baptist	\$100.00
Milwaukee, Northwest Baptist	\$2,916.00
Mount Pleasant, I.C.A.R.E. Ministries	\$216.92
Mount Pleasant, Immanuel	\$1,121.25
Pewaukee, Crossroads	\$591.03
Racine, Hope Community	\$629.88
LBA TOTAL	\$16,745.31

NORTHWOODS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bemidji, Ridgewood Baptist	\$233.00
Cambridge, Cross Pointe	\$550.00
Ely, Berean Baptist	\$600.00
Grand Rapids, Calvary Pines Baptist	\$450.00
Hill City, Hill City Baptist	\$100.00
Rice Lake, Hope Baptist	\$430.00
Roseau, Immanuel Baptist	\$2,842.60
NWBA TOTAL	\$5,205.60

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION

Austin, Austin Baptist	\$190.50
Mankato, Hope Baptist (Gospel Joy)	\$7,651.00
Marshall, Radiant Life	\$605.74
Red Wing, Hiawatha Valley Baptist	\$2,681.00
Rochester, Emmanuel Baptist	\$4,738.99
Rochester, Emmanuel en Espanol	\$27.70
Rochester, Redemption City	\$12,890.76
Rochester, Rochester Community Baptist	\$200.00
Viola, Viola Bible	\$500.10
SMNBA Total	\$29,485.79

NAME	CP YTD
------	--------

TWIN CITIES METRO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bloomington, Ebenezer Community	\$300.00
Bloomington, Hope of Nations Fellowship	\$175.20
Bloomington, MN Kangnam Korean Baptist	\$100.00
Bloomington, Southtown Baptist	\$4,470.71
Brooklyn Park, North Center Baptist	\$375.00
Coon Rapids, First Hmong Baptist	\$1,500.00
Eagan, Good News	\$4,850.00
Fridley, Grace Evangelical Free	\$500.00
Maple Grove, Northwood	\$200.00
Maple Grove, Unlock	\$200.00
Minneapolis, Jubilee	\$2,000.00
Minneapolis, New Hope Baptist	\$500.00
Minnetonka, Slavic Bap Church of the Transfiguration	\$600.00
Monticello, First Baptist	\$1,346.46
New Prague, Calvary	\$4,533.55
North St. Paul, Eternal Life Hmong	\$208.33
Roseville, Twin City Hmong	\$97.00
Sartell, Faith Journey	\$1,613.33
Spring Lake Park, Hmong Hope Community	\$1,000.00
St. Michael, Northwest Bible	\$2,000.00
St. Paul, Followers Of Christ Hmong	\$1,855.00
St. Paul, Iglesia Hispana Betel	\$260.00
Sunfish Lake, Bethel Baptist	\$1,200.00
Sunfish Lake, Vietnamese Baptist	\$140.00
White Bear Lake, Emmaus	\$500.00
White Bear Lake, Faith Fellowship	\$720.00
TCMBA TOTAL	\$31,244.58

GREATER WISCONSIN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Boscobel, Blue River Valley	\$214.92
Kieler, Kieler Community	\$1,230.36
Madison, Campus Community	\$300.00
Madison, City on a Hill	\$3,375.00
Madison, Doxa	\$3,240.00
Madison, East Madison Baptist	\$1,654.00
Madison, Emmanuel	\$256.00
Madison, Hope In Christ Assembly	\$339.00
Madison, Livingstone Baptist	\$1,126.00
Madison, Midvale Baptist	\$697.60
Monroe, Redemption	\$1,000.00
Platteville, Rolling Hills	\$625.00
Reedsburg, Trinity Baptist	\$3,133.32
Sparta, Gospel Baptist	\$495.59
Sun Prairie, Christ Fellowship	\$200.00
Sun Prairie, Reborn in Christ Baptist	\$476.14
Sun Prairie, Transformation	\$735.00
Sun Prairie, United Hmong	\$196.65
Waterloo, Centro Biblico La Roca	\$30.00
WI Dells, Rock of Hope	\$400.00
WI Rapids, Church at Wazeecha	\$675.24
WI Rapids, First Baptist	\$100.00
GWBA Total	\$20,499.82

OTHER

Eau Claire, Jacob's Well	\$1,700.00
Eau Claire, One in Christ	\$651.55
OTHER TOTAL	\$2,351.55

MWBC TOTAL RECEIVED	\$135,050.23
----------------------------	---------------------

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

An overhead view of a man and a woman embracing in a large, oval-shaped metal baptismal tank filled with water. The man is wearing a dark t-shirt with 'COMPANY' on the back and grey shorts. The woman has long dark hair and is wearing a dark t-shirt. They are standing on a small white platform inside the tank. In the background, several people are sitting on red chairs, watching the scene. The floor is grey.

YOUR GENEROSITY IS
more than a gift

Annie Armstrong
Easter Offering



North American
Mission Board