

Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist

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September 2024

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Leo Endel announces June 30 retirement



Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention executive board members gather around Leo Endel to pray over him after hearing the executive director announce his retirement.

Rochester, Minn. — Leo Endel, executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention since 2002, announced that he will retire June 30, 2025.

Endel made the announcement to the MWBC executive board on Friday, Sept. 13, as they met at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Rochester, Minn. He said the ten-month notice was being given because “there are things we need to do

to plan this transition so that your next executive director might have a smooth and effective beginning.”

The morning following Endel’s retirement announcement, the executive board elected a search committee to be chaired by Steve Melvin, who retired from MWBC in 2018 after serving 20 years as the convention’s church starting catalyst. Hoyt Lovelace, pastor of missions of Resonate Church in Janesville, Wis., will serve as vice chairman. Also on the search committee are Bob Ray, pastor, East Madison Baptist Church, Madison, Wis.; Les Stevens, pastor, Chester Woods Community Church, Rochester, Minn.; Paul Fries, retired

Plan now for MWBC annual meeting

Appleton, Wis. — Time is running out for electing messengers and making hotel reservations for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention annual meeting, scheduled Oct. 25-26 at Valley Baptist

Church in Appleton, Wis.

The annual meeting begins at 1 p.m., Friday and ends at noon, Saturday.

The meeting will be preceded by a 9-11:30 a.m. Friday pastors’ conference at the

church, featuring Jeff Iorg, newly elected president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. Iorg served as president of Gateway Seminary

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See **RETIRE** page 2



This group photo shows the crowd attending the Hmong Baptist National Association north region picnic Aug. 24 at Elk Mound Park near Eau Claire, Wis. Na Herr, MWBC intercultural catalyst/team facilitator, brought a word of encouragement from the Bible to the group which represented 17 of the 20 Hmong churches affiliated with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

RETIRE

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pastor, Trinity Baptist Church, Reedsburg, Wis.; Joe Young, pastor, First Hmong Baptist Church, Coon Rapids, Minn.; Roy Watson, pastor, Monumental Baptist Church, Milwaukee, Wis.; Sarah Mickow, layperson, Emmanuel Baptist, Rochester, Minn.; Penny Reedy, Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, International Falls, Minn.; International Falls, Minn.; Daniel Goba, (nonvoting), pastor, Ebenezer Community Church Bloomington, Minn.

The executive board also accepted Endel's recommendation that Mark Elliott, retired associational mission strategist for the Heartland Church Network in Omaha, Neb., be brought in as a consultant to help orient and assist the new search committee.

They agreed to work toward electing the next executive director at the Apr. 25-26, 2025 executive board meeting. That would provide about a month of leadership overlap so that Endel could

assist his successor by orienting him to his new task.

Endel left an 11-year pastorate at Southern Hills Baptist Church in Sioux City, Iowa, to become MWBC's executive director on May 6, 2002. He is the convention's third executive director. Otha Winningham, who had led the M-W Fellowship since 1975, became the first executive director when the convention was founded in 1983. Winningham retired in 1993 and was succeeded by Bill Tinsley who served until June 30, 2001.

In other action, the executive board approved a "Resolution on the Centennial Anniversary of the SBC Cooperative Program," which affirms the Cooperative Program as "our primary method of funding our Great Commission cooperation at home and abroad." The resolution will be offered at the MWBC annual meeting for consideration by the messengers. The full text of the resolution is printed [here](#).

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churches will be able to vote during the business sessions.

There is no childcare available during the annual meeting or pastor's conference.

The convention hotel is the Holiday Inn Appleton. [Click here to make reservations.](#)

Back to the beginning

Resolution on the Centennial Anniversary of the SBC Cooperative Program

WHEREAS, In 2025 Southern Baptists will celebrate the centennial anniversary of our Cooperative Program; and

WHEREAS, Upon the establishment of the Cooperative Program, M.E. Dodd, Chairman of the Commission on the Future Program, exhorted Southern Baptists toward "a unity of purpose and consecration never known before;" and

WHEREAS, Since 1925 the Cooperative Program has provided a comprehensive funding mechanism for like-minded Baptist churches to support missions in all the world, all the time, at the same time (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8); and

WHEREAS, The biblical doctrine of cooperation compels us to work together and thereby effect a greater reward for our efforts (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12); and

WHEREAS, During these past 41 years, Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptists have contributed \$17.3 million through the Cooperative Program to fund missionaries, disaster relief efforts, church planting, church revitalization, chaplaincies, evangelistic initiatives, discipleship strategies, pastor care, Christian education, Baptist communications, human needs ministries, and more; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptists have made a great commitment to our missionaries, both at home and abroad, and to our larger family of Baptist workers whose Great Commission efforts are supported and sustained through Cooperative Program giving; and

WHEREAS, Article IV of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention constitution states that, along with cooperative participation, "financial contribution through the Cooperative Program" is evidence that a church is "in harmony with the work and purpose of the Convention;"

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention meeting in Appleton, Wis., Oct. 25-26, 2024, affirm the Cooperative Program as our primary method of funding our Great Commission cooperation at home and abroad; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we ascribe thanksgiving and glory to God for blessing the partnership in the gospel we have known through Cooperative Program giving for one-hundred years (Philippians 1:3-5); and be it further

RESOLVED, That we are grateful for the churches that give faithfully and sacrificially through the Cooperative Program and for all who openly promote, support, and commit to the Cooperative Program among our family of churches, associations, and ministry partners; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we commit ourselves to the celebration and promotion of the Cooperative Program within our churches, associations, and entities in its one-hundredth year.

ANNUAL

continued from page one

2004-24. Before that he was executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention.

All members of MWBC affiliated churches are welcome and encouraged to come. Those elected as messengers by their

Time for me to pass the baton

In my consultation with churches, I often note that churches have life-cycles; I have now discovered that people do too. Friday night I informed the executive board of my intent to retire from my role at the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention on June 30, 2025. My emotions are mixed,



Perspectives

Leo Endel

but God's timing is certain. I believe God has prepared the convention for new leadership that will lead with fresh excitement and clarity to guide the MWBC.

While this is still ten months away, there are things we need to do to plan this transition so that your next executive director will have a smooth and effective beginning.

Our bylaws note that the officers of the convention nominate the search committee. Last week I met with President Daniel Goba, First Vice-President Chris Phillips, Second Vice-President Joseph

Young, and Recording Secretary Tim Amert. We prayed, collaborated, and drafted the first recommendations regarding this process. These recommendations were presented to the executive board on Friday night, Sept. 13.

Your officers recommended a nine-person search committee be established that represents the diversity of our convention. Article 4 of the MWBC constitution states that any active member in a cooperating MWBC church is eligible to serve. They considered active and past convention officers, pastors, and leaders with a track record of serving and supporting the work of the convention through personal involvement and giving. They nominated nine individuals

and three alternates that were presented to the board on Friday night. On Saturday morning the board was allowed to discuss and alter the nominations presented and then a final list was approved by the full executive board on Saturday morning. That list is in the front page article about my retirement.

Further, the officers recommended to the executive board that we secure Mark Elliott, retired associational mission strategist for the Heartland Church Network (Omaha, Neb.) to be brought in as a consultant to help orient and assist the new search committee.

For obvious reasons, I will not oversee nor will I try to influence this process, but I am willing to resource

the committee at their request. I believe we have gifted and capable leaders within our network of churches, and I plan to recommend that they consider four men whom I believe are uniquely prepared to take on this role. Perhaps God would lead you to call one of these leaders; they already know our diversity and our heartbeat. However, I anticipate that your search committee will also look beyond these men to do a broader search. I am confident that God will lead them to His chosen and prepared leader.

I hope that the executive board will be able to prayerfully seek, find, and then elect the next executive director at the Apr.

See **BATON** page 6

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.

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You are better than you think

This last weekend was one of those weekends we live for.

At 77 I taught my 7-year-old grandson to ride a bike. He had been unwilling to try, convinced it was something he could

not do, paralyzed with self-doubt. But the time had come. He needed to learn. We used his sister's hand-me-down bike, pink with pink pedals.



Reflections

Bill Tinsley

I told him to stand on one foot, while I did the same. His balance was much better than mine. I explained that no one can balance on a bike standing still. We started at the top of a moderate hill so he

could learn to balance without pedaling. The pedals got in the way, so I removed them. I lowered the seat so he could place his feet on the ground while seated

to steady himself and to stop. At first it was only a few feet, then a few more, by the end of the day he was able to balance the bike all the way to the bottom of the hill. That was enough.

The following day, I added the pedals. I told him how my dad taught me to ride a bike when I was his age. I loved it then and still do, even at 77. We went to a school parking lot. He learned to position the pedal at the top of a downward stroke to launch himself into motion. He wobbled. He didn't go far. I took his face in

my hands, looked into his eyes and said, "You are better than you think you are." By the end of the day he was riding wherever he wanted to ride. When he demonstrated his newfound skill to his parents they were thrilled. He said, "Tomorrow, you can buy me my own bike!" They did.

That experience reminded me of a lesson we all must continually learn. We all have moments when we struggle with self-doubt. We feel like Charlie Brown

See **BETTER** page 7

MWBC Hosts National Literacy Missions Partnership ESL Workshop

Fourteen persons attended an English as a Second Language (ESL) Workshop Sept. 13-15 at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Rochester, Minn. Attendees were from Emmanuel or from Trinity Baptist Church in Reedsburg, Wis.



Leadership
Clint Calvert

The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention hosted the workshop and scheduled it to meet at the same time as the MWBC executive board meeting to highlight the importance of this ministry. Sessions were 6-8:30

p.m. Friday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, and 1-3:30 p.m., Sunday.

The workshop was led by Cheryl Tarr, a National Literacy Missions Partnership (NLMP) trainer. NLMP is an organization of Southern Baptist state conventions that freely cooperate to support literacy ministries. They work closely with NAMB and Send Relief to maintain training materials and to assist with ministry requests. In addition to ESL workshops,

Baptist state conventions that freely cooperate to support literacy ministries. They work closely with NAMB and Send Relief to maintain training materials and to assist with ministry requests. In addition to ESL workshops,

the NLMP helps local churches share Jesus through Adult Reading and Writing, and Tutoring Children and Youth.

Claudean Boatman, NLMP coordinator, explains, "Each 12 hour fully live ESL Basic Workshop is led by a trainer who has been trained through the National Literacy Missions Partnership and the North American Mission Board/Send Relief. The Basic Workshop equips local church volunteers to intentionally share the gospel with new English speakers."

The cost of training materials was provided for participants by Cooperative Program



These 14 attended the ESL workshop Sept. 13-15 at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Rochester, Minn. Back row: Ann Amert, Tara Calvert, Tammy Becker, Judy Erhman-Haight, Jonathan Lemaster, Amanda Duley, Katrina Clingerman, Cheryl Tarr, and Phil Hoover. Front row: Gresin Hawse, Susan Snead, Ted Craig, Ashley Johnson, and Suzanne Dreibelbis.

giving. Participants paid their own travel and lodging costs.

According to Tara Calvert, workshop organizer, "There are many roles to fill in the ESL ministry of a local church. Students who speak English as their

first language can be certified as lead teachers after completing the training."

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

Offering meets vital needs

By Leo Endel

This has been a tremendous year of ministry because of your giving last year! Look at what has happened because you gave last year to the State Missions Offering of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

You helped fund our disaster relief efforts by funding ministry and leadership through Ben and Kayla Seamans.

You helped two couples going through difficult challenges.

You provided stipends for six ministry interns throughout the two states.

You made it possible for this year's SEA Mission Trip to Thai-

land where our students taught English in public schools and where we connected to half a dozen churches planted either through the International Mission Board or in partnership with our Hmong partners.

You helped fund NextGen Leadership development among our children, youth, and young adults through training, missions scholarships, and leadership opportunities.

And now it is time to give again. We are restructuring this year's offering around our greatest financial needs. While we will continue to provide resources to Hands of Hope, Equip, Empower, and Milwaukee Kingdom

Growth, this year's state missions offering will resource needs that we can't currently fund in any other way.

25% Disaster Relief: Director stipend; DR response resources; training and support
25% Next Generation Initiatives: Church internships; Youth/children's camp assistance; NextGen Leadership gatherings

25% Cross-cultural Missions: Southeast Asia Mission Trip and scholarships; English as Second Language (ESL) initiatives; Hmong, Hispanic and Liberian initiatives; Other language groups
10% Leadership De-

2024 State Missions Offering

The Minnesota Wisconsin Baptist Convention
mwbc.org

We will tell the
next generation
the praise worthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.
Psalm 78:4

scan this image to give

THE OFFERING BREAKDOWN	
25%	Disaster Relief
25%	Next Generation Initiatives
25%	Cross-cultural Missions
10%	Leadership Development
10%	WMU Missions Support & Projects
5%	Pastoral Emergencies

See OFFERING page 7

Planting the seed of the gospel

This year's SEA (Southeast Asia) mission team taught

English at four public schools in Thailand and led two English camps for students. For the English lessons,

team members picked stories out of the Bible and adapted them into English lessons. We had four teaching teams that taught four rotations of students for about 30-40 minutes each. Each team taught a different story of the Bible.

One team taught the story of Noah and the ark. They created a list of animals and taught the students how to pronounce the names of the animals. Then they played a game where the students drew an animal on a

piece of paper. Next, they folded the paper into an airplane and

put the animals on the ark by throwing the airplane at a picture of the ark on the board.

Another team taught the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. After telling the story, they asked the students what their favorite food was. Each student shared their favorite food in English.

In total, we planted the seed of the gospel in more than 300 students. As we were leaving each site, teachers and staff came up to tell us how much they want us to come back and to stay longer. Our local church partners also expressed gratitude to us for opening this

door of ministry into the community.

One of our team members even got to share the gospel with a female teacher. She had heard of Jesus before and wanted to know more about Christianity. Our team member gave her a copy of the New Testament in Thai. As he walked away, he looked back and saw the teacher with the book opened and looking through it already.

While the mission team had a very enjoyable time teaching students and playing with them during recess, the greatest reward was seeing five girls commit their lives to Christ at English camp. They had attended the previous year's camp and heard the gospel for the first time then. This year, they gave their hearts to Jesus. This was evidenced by the fact that they continued singing and praising God, even



Students gather for an assembly before the mission team begins teaching them English.



Instead of hiring a private driver, team members decide to ride a local taxi to the airport, saving money and getting a true cultural experience.

after camp had ended.

God is opening many doors through the SEA English teaching ministry. Plans are in the works to send one or two more teams next summer to continue the ministry. I invite

our churches to consider joining a team. You can go to the convention website for more information: www.mwbc.org.

Finally, I want to

See **SEED** page 6

God is working in lives of students

Here are a few stories from what is happening in Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention's collegiate ministry.

Zach Simmons, Northfield Community Church, tells of a student at St. Olaf



Student Ministries
Bob Smith

College. "They began reading the Gospel of Mark at the beginning of the year. The student said he wanted to begin 'taking his faith more seriously in college.' While he expressed assent

with the gospel and

the basic principles of Christianity, he didn't experience conversion until April. He told me this: 'I used to believe that if I didn't sin all day, I was doing God a favor. So, my prayers before I went to bed were essentially, "You're welcome, God." But now, when I sin, it makes me feel so sad because it is the precious blood of Christ that had to be

shed for me.' He would also say that while he knew the gospel before, he wasn't in awe of it. In April, he was saved by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3: 5)."

Phillip Hansen has learned that a former student who faithfully attended Bible study at Rolling Hills in Platteville and was a small group leader and part

of their leadership/discipleship group there, now plans to be a part of church planting and, maybe one day, pastoring. A current student, after becoming a pilot, plans to go to seminary to become a pastor. Others are desiring to become missionaries and are seeking short- and medium-term mission

See **STUDENT** page 6

BATON

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25-26, 2025 executive board meeting and thus provide for an approximate month of leadership overlap, so that I might be able to assist him by orienting him to his new task.

When we approved our 2025 Strategy Statement, I sensed the timing would probably coincide well with this transition. I would recommend to the next executive director and the MWBC executive board that they consider one of the early actions of the board under its new leadership might be the reassessment of the convention's strategy.

I have such mixed emotions as I think through these years of ministry with you and the wonderful people of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention. The majority of my ministry has taken place here. I see with fondness the hundreds of leaders and friends

that together represent the Body of Christ. I remember how retirements and deaths always made me sad, but I also remember how God has always provided. When we let go, we are reminded that God has always been and always will be in control.

I am not yet ready for June, but I am excited about what God has next for the MWBC. It is time for me to pass the baton. I am convinced that God's next leader will be perfect for the opportunities that are already appearing just over the horizon.

With love and great appreciation for each of you,
Leo

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

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STUDENT

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trips to explore more of what their calling might entail.

Peter Ko tells of a recent UW-Madison graduate (BA-Education) whom God has called him to serve His people and His church. He decided to return to South Korea to receive seminary training and prepare for future ministry. He is a faithful follower of Jesus and a key

leader at Livingstone.

Wes Grimm tells of a student who was baptized in the spring who is pursuing an internship with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship for vocational ministry while also serving at Red Village Church in Madison.

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

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Wisconsin pastor cleared of abuse charges

Madison, Wis. (BP) – A circuit court jury cleared former Wisconsin pastor Robert Stine of sexual abuse charges on July 17.

Stine, 61, was pastor of Midvale Baptist Church in Madison, Wis., from 2007 until his resignation in June

2023, two months before he was indicted in August on two counts of sexual abuse against a minor.

Stine's attorney, Christopher Van Wagner, said, "We are grateful the jury looked closely at the evidence and reached the right

decision."

Because of the charges, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families revoked the license of the childcare center operating in the church's building. It is unknown if the revocation will be reversed.

SEED

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acknowledge the teams and local partners who worked so diligently to make the trip a success. We had a very

diverse team ranging in age from 15 all the way to 70. We had men and women of different ethnicities come together for one purpose: proclaiming the glory of Christ to

the nations. Praise God for the unity we have in Christ!

Na Herr is intercultural catalyst/team

Back to the beginning



Annual Meeting
October 25-26

The meeting begins
Friday at 1 pm
and ends Saturday at noon

**For more information
visit mwbc.org
or call 507-282-3636**

We will tell the

next generation

the
praise
worthy
deeds
of the
LORD,
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power,
and the
wonders
he has done.
Psalm 78:4

**Pastors Conference
October 25, 9 AM**

featuring
Dr. Jeff Iorg
President of the
SBC Executive Committee



The Minnesota Wisconsin Baptist Convention

mwbc.org



Valley Baptist Church
3600 N Chippewa St
Appleton, Wisconsin

BETTER

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in Peanuts: “One step on the stage of life and we feel that we are not right for the part.” It is as if God is constantly whispering into our ear the words I said to my grandson, “You are better than you think you are.”

Read God’s conversation with Moses on the back side of the desert in Exodus 3. Moses continually argues that he is unable to do what God is asking him to do. He is not articulate. No one will believe him. The people will not follow. But God insisted: “Go; I am sending you.”

Listen to Isaiah in the temple, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips,” (Isa. 6). But God took his guilt away and said, “Go and tell this

people” the message from the Lord.

Or Peter when He met Jesus: “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man.” Jesus responded, “I will make you fishers of men.”

Whatever your weakness, whatever your failing, whatever your fear. You are better than you think you are. God sees it in you! He will forgive you, cleanse you and make you better

than you believed you could be. (2 Cor. 5:17).

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.

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OFFERING

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velopment: Pastor peer learning; Leadership resources

10% WMU: missions support and projects

5% Pastoral Emergencies

Please consider collecting a special offering this September/October to give your church the opportunity to support ministries that are making a difference here in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

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

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BLBA: Bay Lakes Baptist Association
SWBA: Southern Wisconsin Baptist Association
LBA: Lakeland Baptist Association

NBA: Northwoods Baptist Association
SMBA: Southern Minnesota Baptist Association
TCMBA: Twin Cities Metro Baptist Association

MWBC events are in bold print.

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

OCTOBER

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

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

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

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

NOVEMBER

10-12 Baptist General Convention of Texas Annual Meeting, Waco, Texas

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

DECEMBER

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

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

27-1/5 Israel Trip

JANUARY

1 New Year’s Day – **MWBC Office Closed**

FEBRUARY

6-8 Pastors and Wives Retreat, Green Lake (Wis.) Conference Center

MARCH

6-8 Empower Conference, Green Lake (Wis.) Conference Center

16-28 Liberia Mission Trip

APRIL

4-5 Equip – NextGen Ministry Conference, Sutherland Baptist Church, Bloomington, Minn.

18 Good Friday – MWBC Office Closed

25-26 MWBC Executive Board Meeting, Rochester, Minn.

MAY

16 New Pastor Orientation, Rochester, Minn.

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

22 Send Network Multiplication Pipeline Training, Lambeau Field, Green Bay Wis.

JUNE

6-11 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, Dallas, Texas

14-21 Guyana Mission Trip

TBD Hands of Hope

JULY

4 Independence Day – **MWBC Office Closed**

14-30 SEA Mission Trip - Thailand

AUGUST

2-9 Argentina Mission Trip

SEPTEMBER

1-30 Season of Prayer for State Missions

1 Labor Day – **MWBC Office Closed**

12-13 MWBC Executive Board, Rochester, Minn.

TBD Called Out Youth Conference, Baraboo, Wis.

OCTOBER

23 Church Planters Gathering, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Rochester, Minn.

24 Pastors Conference, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Rochester, Minn.

24-25 MWBC Annual Meeting, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Rochester, Minn.

27-28 Missouri Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, Branson Hilton Convention Center, Branson, Mo.

NOVEMBER

16-18 Baptist General Convention of Texas Annual Meeting, Abilene, Texas

27-28 Thanksgiving Holiday – **MWBC Office Closed**

DECEMBER

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

Southern Baptist Hmong churches impact Hmong International Freedom Festival

By Karen Willoughby

St. Paul, Minn. (BP) – The Hmong International Freedom Festival, one of the largest gatherings in the world of the formerly agrarian people with roots in Laos, Vietnam and Thailand, takes place the weekend before the Fourth of July. And thanks to a strong Southern Baptist Hmong presence at this year's festival, dozens of attendees responded to the gospel.

Last year, 37,000 attended the event at the spacious Como Regional Park. This year, more than 57,000 were onsite to take advantage of sporting events, vendors and other resources.

"I felt like God's plan was fulfilled," Mary Her told Baptist Press. She organized the first-ever joint praise and worship sessions at this year's festival. "The Lord parted the skies that weekend. It had been raining



A group of Hmong Christians received a two-hour time slot to host a worship service on the main stage of the Hmong International Freedom Festival, a large annual gathering, held this year in St. Paul, Minn.

almost every day for two weeks. A few days before the festival I prayed to God, 'Lord, You promised me the weather would be beautiful and that you would protect it from the rain and I trust that your will be done.'

"It rained Friday night. Saturday and Sunday were dry, and it rained again on Monday morning," said Her, a member at One in Christ Hmong Baptist Church in Hudson, Wis. "The Lord told me, 'I have gone before you,

I will be with you and protect this [event],' and He was very present. He fulfilled His promises!"

Not unlike the Independence Day celebrations days later, the Hmong celebrate freedom at the festival, Her said.

"Before we came to America as refugees, our people were supporting the Americans in fighting the war in Vietnam and the secret war in Laos," she said. "As a result we experienced oppression and

genocide."

The idea for a joint praise and worship team came to Her at last year's event, where various Christian churches had a presence but were disjointed.

She said the Holy Spirit prompted her to bring the churches together in a show of unity.

"I prayed and I fasted for six months before I finally had the courage to fulfill God's calling for me," Her said. "In December I took Mee Vang, the president of the board of trustees of the International Hmong Freedom Festival, to lunch at a Chinese restaurant called Tea House in St. Paul. I shared my vision with her and she was very excited about it. She wanted it [the festival] to be inclusive because the Hmong community is very diverse."

Festival organizers agreed to allow the group two hours each day on the main stage.

"I literally had two months to organize the two, two-hour services and organize the

Hmong Baptist National Association's display booth," Her said. "I prayed and fasted, and the Lord's hand was all over this. 'I am with you,' He would tell me. 'I have gone before you. Do not be discouraged.'"

Her is the Women's Ministry Director for the Hmong National Baptist Association, and is a senior clinical supervisor for the Amherst Wilder Foundation's school-based mental health program that serves 30 schools in St. Paul. Fifteen years ago Her started the first culturally-specific, school-based, mental health program for Hmong children in the U.S.

"But I had never done anything like this before," Her said. "I prayed and fasted all year. After I got permission, I put together a steering committee of local Southern Baptist Hmong pastors and church members to plan these events to praise, honor and wor-

See **FESTIVAL** page 11



Pastors Conference

Friday, Oct. 25th
9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Topic: Leadership

Featured Speaker: Dr. Jeff Iorg

Valley Baptist Church
3600 N Chippewa St
Appleton, WI 54911

Iorg is President and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATIONS

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

Chris Phillips, associate pastor of children and students at Trinity Baptist Church in Reedsburg for the past 12 years, was ordained to the gospel ministry Aug. 25. The charge to the congregation was brought by Pastor Mike Lopp and the charge to the candidate was brought by Paul Fries, who is Chris' father-in-law.

Jamie Work of the International Mission Board will be special guest for the annual meeting of Southern Wisconsin Baptist Association, Oct. 5, at Red Village Church in Madison.

NORTHWOODS

The remodel of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in International Falls went well, thanks to a team of men from Flint Baptist Church who "worked hard and accomplished a great amount of work," according to Aaron Satchwill, director of missions.

BAY LAKES

Guy Fredrick, associational mission strategist, reports that BLBA has elected as moderator Melivn Zimmerman, a deacon at Highland Crest Church. Fredrick also said the association is exploring an opportunity to own their own youth camp.



On Saturday, Aug. 24, Hiawatha Valley Baptist Church in Red Wing, Minn., honored Chuck and Susan Friemel as they retired after more than 30 years of service to the congregation. Chuck was the founding pastor of the church.



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Mission Gifts from the Churches

MINNESOTA WISCONSIN BAPTIST CONVENTION COOPERATIVE PROGRAM/OFFERING RECEIPTS

January - August 2024

Cooperative Program Budget 2024 Year to Date	\$450,016.67
Cooperative Program Receipts 2024 Year to Date	\$427,181.25
Under Budget Year to Date	\$22,835.42

NAME	CP YTD
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BAY LAKES BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Amherst, Amherst Bible	\$250.00
Appleton, Church of the Living Water	\$278.09
Appleton, Hmong Baptist Mission	\$581.22
Appleton, Valley	\$49,559.60
Clintonville, First Baptist	\$1,870.08
Green Bay, Graceway Fellowship	\$4,066.32
Green Bay, Highland Crest	\$33,236.63
Sheboygan, Mapledale Baptist	\$2,448.33
Tilleda, Bethany Baptist	\$1,816.90
Waupaca, Fellowship Baptist	\$1,315.62
BLBA TOTAL	\$95,422.79

LAKELAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bassett, Westosha Baptist	\$2,440.00
Brookfield, Redemption	\$2,450.00
Brown Deer, Brown Deer Baptist	\$1,000.00
Franklin, El Bethel Baptist	\$1,000.00
Franklin, Emmaus Fellowship	\$600.00
Kenosha, Amistad Cristiana	\$2,100.00
Kenosha, Fellowship Baptist	\$9,064.99
Kenosha, Redeemer Parkside	\$3,000.00
Milwaukee, Grace Point	\$444.43
Milwaukee, Iglesia Su Presencia	\$332.20
Milwaukee, Layton Avenue	\$8,477.45
Milwaukee, Mercy Memorial	\$1,050.00
Milwaukee, Milwaukee Arabic	\$277.94
Milwaukee, Monumental Baptist	\$1,120.00
Milwaukee, Mt Horeb Baptist	\$300.00
Milwaukee, Mt Pilgrim	\$300.00
Milwaukee, Northwest Baptist	\$4,000.00
Milwaukee, UFlourish Church	\$1,000.00
Mount Pleasant, I.C.A.R.E.	\$806.67
Mount Pleasant, Immanuel	\$8,476.93
Pewaukee, Crossroads	\$2,264.56
Pleasant Prairie, Pleasant Prairie	\$6,914.20
Racine, Hope Community	\$1,002.66
LBA TOTAL	\$58,422.03

NORTHWOODS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Bemidji, Ridgewood Baptist	\$944.00
Cambridge, Cross Pointe Church	\$550.00
Ely, Berean Baptist	\$600.00
Grand Rapids, Calvary Pines	\$1,640.00
Hill City, Hill City Baptist Church	\$600.00
New York Mills, Grace Connection	\$3,617.90
Rice Lake, Hope Baptist Church	\$5,045.00
Roseau, Immanuel Baptist	\$4,558.19
Thief River Falls, Cornerstone	\$1,350.00
Warroad, Westside Baptist	\$2,644.02
NWBA TOTAL	\$21,549.11

NAME

CP YTD

TWIN CITIES METRO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Amery, Journey	\$5,000.00
Bloomington, Hope of Nations	\$820.86
Bloomington, MN Kangnam	\$800.00
Bloomington, Southtown Baptist	\$8,582.88
Brooklyn Park, Ebenezer	\$900.00
Brooklyn Park, North Center	\$2,585.32
Burnsville, Berean Baptist	\$2,000.00
Coon Rapids, First Hmong	\$1,750.00
Eagan, Eurasia Baptist	\$150.00
Eagan, Good News	\$4,625.00
Fridley, Good News Hmong	\$750.00
Lino Lakes MN, Bethel Moldovian	\$400.00
Maple Grove, Northwood Church	\$800.00
Maple Grove, Sonlight	\$300.00
Maple Grove, Unlock	\$800.00
Minneapolis, All Peoples	\$4,320.00
Minneapolis, Jubilee	\$2,000.00
Minnetonka, Redeemer Bible	\$800.00
Monticello, Grace Bible	\$500.00
New Hope, Westview	\$3,000.00
New Prague, Calvary	\$16,382.30
North St. Paul - Eternal Life	\$1,008.00
Richfield, Richfield Bible	\$600.00
Roseville, Roseville Baptist	\$5,600.00
Roseville, Twin City Hmong	\$820.00
Spring Lake Park, Hmong Hope	\$500.00
St. Louis Park, First Ukrainian	\$500.00
St. Michael, Northwest Bible	\$2,000.00
St. Paul, Cities	\$10,000.00
St. Paul, Followers Of Christ	\$8,298.60
St. Paul, Iglesia Hispana Betel	\$600.00
Sunfish Lake, Bethel Baptist	\$5,166.84
Sunfish Lake, Vietnamese	\$480.00
White Bear Lake, Emmaus	\$2,000.00
TCMBA Total	\$94,839.80

Minnesota-Wisconsin
Baptist

Mission Gifts from the Churches

NAME	CP YTD	NAME	CP YTD
SOUTHERN WI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION		SOUTHERN MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION	
Boscobel, Blue River Valley	\$1,014.12	Austin, Austin Baptist	\$3,732.12
Janesville, Resonate	\$5,794.63	Chester, Chester Woods	\$1,350.40
La Crosse, Crossway	\$1,200.00	Eyota, Hmong Baptist	\$1,500.00
La Crosse, New Hope	\$600.00	Marshall, Radiant Life	\$2,670.33
Madison, Antioch Fellowship	\$600.00	Red Wing, Hiawatha Valley	\$5,198.67
Madison, Campus Community	\$1,200.00	Rochester, Emmanuel Baptist	\$13,314.58
Madison, City on a Hill	\$10,000.00	Rochester, Redemption City	\$19,113.65
Madison, Doxa	\$16,904.05	Rochester, Rochester Community	\$800.00
Madison, East Madison Baptist	\$5,880.00	Sartell, Faith Journey	\$4,441.16
Madison, Emmanuel	\$560.00	Viola, Viola Bible	\$1,634.29
Madison, Hope In Christ Assembly	\$1,068.56	Winona, Cornerstone Community	\$2,887.50
Madison, Livingstone Baptist	\$3,678.00	SMNBA Total	\$56,642.70
Madison, Midvale Baptist	\$6,777.75	OTHER	
Madison, Red Village	\$4,250.00	Eau Claire, Jacob's Well	\$5,950.00
Madison, Shalom Christian	\$162.00	Eau Claire, One in Christ	\$812.24
Monroe, Redemption	\$1,440.00	OTHER TOTAL	\$6,762.24
Platteville, Rolling Hills	\$6,431.60		
Reedsburg, Trinity Baptist	\$11,600.00		
Sparta, Gospel Baptist	\$3,003.33		
Sun Prairie, Christ Fellowship	\$800.00		
Sun Prairie, Reborn in Christ	\$1,335.17		
Sun Prairie, Transformation	\$2,025.56		
Sun Prairie, United Hmong	\$605.50		
Waterloo, Cornerstone	\$1,100.00		
Watertown, Watertown	\$300.00		
WI Dells, Rock of Hope	\$1,600.00		
WI Rapids, Church at Wazeecha	\$3,212.31		
WI Rapids, First Baptist	\$400.00		
SWBA Total	\$93,542.58	MWBC TOTAL RECEIVED	\$427,181.25

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

FESTIVAL

continued from page eight

ship God, and to send a message of hope to the Hmong community.”

She invited other evangelical Hmong churches to collaborate in the program, which included local church groups providing Hmong and English-language songs, with preaching done by Southern Baptist pastors: Pastor Vameng Pha from One In Christ Hmong Baptist Church in Hudson, Wis., and Pastor Tswvfwj Muasnumtuam from Cornerstone Hmong Baptist Church in Oakdale, Minn.

An internationally known and popular Hmong vocalist, KB

Xiong, who lives in Georgia, also performed during the prime time midday services.

“I had so much joy over it,” Her said. “Many times our churches are so siloed we don’t even know how to worship God together. Several people came up to me and said thank you for hosting this worship session, and many people who didn’t know God would come and listen.”

There’s more.

In addition to the two services, five Hmong evangelical churches had their own display areas, including one by the several local Southern Baptist Hmong churches in metro St. Paul, which stretches

to nearby Hudson, Wis. That booth focused on evangelism and prayer.

As a result, volunteers for the Hmong Baptist National Association helped lead 60 people—kids and adults—to come to faith in Jesus and to profess what Jesus did for them; 302 youngsters heard the Gospel presented by Hmong children and youth between the ages of 7 and 16.

Gideons International donated 2,100 pocket-sized new Testaments in English that about 60 volunteers—including Southern Baptists from Texas, Wisconsin and North Carolina—helped distribute. The Minnesota Wisconsin Baptist Con-

vention gave 55 full Bibles in English, which were passed on to those who made professions of faith.

Hundreds of people requested prayer.

“We had a lot of children come to ask for prayers for themselves and their parents, who they said are struggling,” Her said. “Adults were asking for prayers for physical, mental and spiritual health as they deal with life. We also dedicated time on an open mic for anyone who wanted to sing songs of praise and worship at our display booth.”

The Hmong International Freedom Festival’s executive director has already expressed interest in

a repeat event next year, Her said. The two women are to meet for lunch again in August to discuss the future of a concerted evangelical presence at the Hmong Freedom Festival.

“We had more than 57,000 people attend, 20,000 more than last year,” Her said. “We were basically praising God amongst all those people. We had 60 people volunteer to help, with five Baptist, two Christian Missionary Alliance and two Assembly of God churches participating, and everybody who was involved was very thankful. It was a very powerful experience for them.”

Back to the beginning

Working Together

CP COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

Staff Compensation
Building expenses
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Acts 2 local church ministry
Worship
Evangelism
Discipleship
Fellowship
Ministry & Outreach

Our Vision

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

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200+ churches

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Pastoral Emergency
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The Executive Committee

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Southeastern, NC
Gateway, CA
Midwestern, MO
New Orleans, LA

10,000 new churches in the last 10 years

13,391 students in the seminaries

47,592 churches

The North American Mission Board
Church Planting
Revitalization
Evangelism

GuideStone
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The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

WMU Missions

The International Mission Board (IMB)

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. Matthew 28:19-20

3,511 Missionaries
87 Global partners
93 New People Groups
176,795 new believers/2021
22,744 new churches/2021