

A Report on the WFBC Annual Meeting

By PAUL J. SCHARF

The Wisconsin Fellowship of Baptist Churches held its 71st annual meeting this Monday and Tuesday, Sept. 20 and 21, at the Bible Baptist Church of Hudson.

I was an exhibitor for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry at this meeting, and spent the two days interacting with many of the roughly 130 people in attendance—mostly pastors and wives from independent Baptist churches throughout Wisconsin.

The WFBC represents 111 fellowshipping churches—which includes both member churches (the majority) and churches with member pastors. I have spoken in a number of these churches in my service with The Friends of Israel. Further, the church of which I am a member, Fellowship Baptist Church in Watertown—which ordained and commissioned me to serve with The Friends of Israel—is one with a pastor who is an individual member of the WFBC. Thus, I obviously have an interest in this meeting, and have attended it each year that I have been involved with The Friends of Israel.

The theme of this year's conference was "Great Commission Living in 21st-Century Culture," with a theme verse of 2 Timothy 3:1.

The featured speaker was Mark Herbster, associate professor and dean of the college of Bible and church ministries, as well as seminary dean, at Maranatha Baptist University in Watertown. Herbster shared three messages from the New Testament epistles—speaking on Philipians, 2 Timothy and 1 Peter.

"It was a special joy to be together with so many pastors from the state of Wisconsin," Herbster stated. "In a day when so many are divided, unifying around God's Word is so important."

Dr. Brad Anderson, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Antigo, presented a workshop and paper on "Understanding Cultural Issues." In them, he provided a Biblical evaluation regarding the concepts of social justice, critical race theory, intersectionality, diversity, equality/equity/parity, inclusion and wokeness.

"I briefly responded to several of the most troubling and threatening elements of modern culture," Anderson said. "I defined the issues and explained why they were a threat to the Christian church. I am hopeful that pastors and churches recognize the threat posed by today's culture and address these issues boldly."

Dr. Doug McLachlan, chancellor and president emeritus of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Plymouth, Minn., also presented a workshop and paper on "A Church for the Twenty-First Century." Many of the pastors gathered for this conference have been heavily influenced by McLachlan's teaching, so it was a special time of reunion for them.

There were also two business meetings, and the messengers voted to approve three doctrinal and societal resolutions. One was titled “Encouraging Churches to Mentor Those Who Should Seek Pastoral Ministry.” The others were on “Evaluating News” and “Critical Race Theory.”

Paul Vawter, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Elkhorn, was elected to serve as president of the fellowship for the next two years.

“I am thankful for the privilege of serving with so many faithful and godly servants,” Vawter said. “To me the highlight is always the camaraderie of my fellow pastors. We always wish we could see each other more often, but the busyness of life and ministry prevents that, so we try to make up for it when we meet.”

Vawter added: “I grew up in a WFBC church and have always looked up to the men who served on this board, so I consider it an honor to be allowed to hold the position of president.”

“The singing at the conference was full of passion and praise,” said Herbster. “The sessions were timely and inspirational. The WFBC is a fellowship that other states should emulate. I was honored and humbled to speak to this incredible group.”

The WFBC is divided into six regional fellowships, each with a representative. The state missions director is Dr. Scott Jones, who delivered the first message at the conference.

“We had a great spirit as we gathered for the 71st annual meeting of our state fellowship,” Jones stated. “Here some very independent Baptists have found God's grace to work together, supporting two missionaries doing church planting and restoration ministry.”

Next year's meeting is scheduled for Sept. 19 and 20, 2022, at Greendale Baptist Church, with Dr. Greg Huffman as the main speaker.

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