

...year. We explained the actions of the Pillsbury board to delegate its responsibilities to the MBA board and dissolve itself. MBA Board President Rich Riley summarized the activities of the board over the past year. Vice President Micah Tanis spoke on behalf of Treasurer Phil Siefkes regarding the financial information. Secretary Todd Williamson read the memorials of those from the churches who went home to heaven this past year and directed our attention to the testimonies of the Lord's work in the churches. We also welcomed Calvary Baptist Church of Granada and Pastor John Schofield into the association. Praise the Lord for unity and progress.

Representatives from many associated churches were not able to attend, but we look forward to their fellowship in future meetings as our Lord allows.

Annual Report Packet available at mbaoc.org

Officers Added to the MBA Board at the 2021 Annual Meeting:

- Pastor Nathan Delich, First Baptist Church-Marshall (Class of 2024)
- Pastor Lee Peterson, First Baptist Church-Baxter (Class of 2024)

Thank You for Faithful Service as MBA Board Members:

- Pastor Reed Owen, Faith Baptist Church-Hinckley
- Pastor Mike Verway, First Calvary Baptist Church-Inver Grove Heights

FROM THE OFFICERS OF THE MINNESOTA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

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Among the
Churches*

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MBA's 162nd Annual Meeting

by Pastor Rich Riley

MBA President

Praise the Lord for a great annual meeting hosted by Grace Baptist Church in Virginia, MN. The host church made us all feel welcome. The fellowship was sweet, the food was delicious, the preaching was challenging and the singing was encouraging. I don't think an annual meeting has been hosted in northern Minnesota for quite some time. We enjoyed it.

Pastor Lee Ormiston from Family Baptist Church in Minneapolis challenged us on the topic of Evangelizing our Neighborhoods. In the first session, we focused on being right with God ourselves before we reached out to others. We need to be intentional and accountable. The second session encouraged us to see people as Christ sees them, to touch people as Christ touched them, and to respond to people as Christ's servants. We ought to be gentle and patient like Jesus. The third session provided practical strategies for evangelism. Asking sincere questions will help us to understand our neighbors and will develop into spiritual conversations.

The Bible teaching and fellowship comprised the majority of our time, but we also managed the business of the association. The church messengers approved the minutes from last year's meeting along with the financial report. We voted on the new members of the board of trustees and established a nomination committee for next

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Exalting Christ Among the Churches: *Immanuel Baptist Church, Westbrook*

Immanuel Baptist Church traces its origin to the grasshopper plagues of the 1870s. The Danish Baptist Church of Clarks Grove, a few miles north of Albert Lea, gathered provisions for people in Cottonwood County who were struggling with the grasshopper disaster.

The Danish Baptist Church commissioned two men to deliver the supplies to settler-colonists living in the future Storden area. On July 12, 1879, a group of local Baptists organized First Scandinavian Baptist Church and called J.M. Nelson, one of the men who had come from Clarks Grove, to be their pastor.

The arrival of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, & Omaha Railway motivated the congregation to dismantle their place of worship around 1899 and rebuild closer to the Currie Line Railroad. Settler-colonists living closer to the newly incorporated village of Westbrook, five miles west of Storden, preferred to worship in Westbrook.

In 1901 the village of Westbrook donated a plot of land and erected a church building. Mr. Hubbell, a farmer living south of the village, donated \$500 to build the structure. A group of Baptists used the money to build Calvary Baptist Church at the corner of Sixth Street and Ash Avenue. About five years later the congregation disbanded when several families moved from the area.

The Baptists east of Westbrook held services in homes until September 6, 1908, when they called a meeting to organize a congregation. Two months later the group met at the former Calvary Baptist Church with the intent of purchasing the

building. On November 17, 1908, twenty-two charter members (eighteen from the Storden church and four from Calvary) celebrated the founding of Immanuel Baptist Church.

Settling on a meaningful name for the new Baptist church posed a major challenge to the small group of worshipers. They chose Immanuel because the word means “God with us.” Rev. N.H. Byers answered the unanimous call to be the church’s first pastor. He served in that capacity until 1915, when he moved to a new ministry. Ten men served as pastors of Immanuel Baptist from 1908 until 2004, when Rev. Robert Adams began his ministry.

Many changes implemented over the years enhanced the 1901 building. In 1913 the first addition involved digging a basement, adding a bell tower, and installing a furnace and a baptistry. A thirty-two-by-twenty-six-foot addition, including a new kitchen, was added in 1948. The building grew with the addition of an educational wing in 1969.

In 2001 a major building project added facilities for Westbrook Christian Day school, which had opened its doors to ten students on September 5, 1978. The large classroom on the first floor and activity center in the basement of the new addition met the needs of the growing school. Enrollment reached a peak of forty students, but the school closed in 2006 because of falling enrollment.

Immanuel Baptist Church continues to minister in the Westbrook area while supporting ministries around the world. People whose lives have been impacted by the church’s ministry are scattered from coast to coast in the United States as well as on the continents of South America and Asia.

— Carolyn Van Loh

Edited from a January 2018 copy written by C. Van Loh and posted on the MN Historical Society site at mnpedia.org

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