

Vietnamese Baptist gathering bolsters connections

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ATLANTA—Vietnamese-language pastor Peter Le and English-language pastor Linh Huynh, both from Vietnamese Faith Baptist Church in Dallas, translated for each other during the opening session of the 39th annual meeting of the Vietnamese Baptist Union of North America.

“Your struggles are real, but here’s the thing,” Huynh preached in English, which Pastor Le translated into Vietnamese. “There’s nothing wrong with struggles as long as you overcome them and don’t let them overcome you.”

The July 3-7 event drew 1,353 registered participants, as well as many other locals who didn’t register. In addition to the standing-room-only sessions in a hotel ballroom, more than 400 gathered for English-language sessions and 214 more for children’s age-graded VBS activities.

The event’s theme, Mature in Christ, came from Ephesians 4:13—“until we all reach unity in the faith, and in the knowledge of God’s son, growing into a mature man, with a stature measured by Christ’s fulness.”

The group welcomed visitors from Southern Baptist Convention agencies, including Jeremy Sin from the North American Mission Board and Ezra Bae from the International Mission Board. Among the IMB’s 3,500 missionaries who serve in 122 nations are 300 Asians, Bae said.



Christian Phan Phước Lành of Gulf Breeze, Fla., begins his third year as executive director of the Vietnamese Baptist Union of North America. (BP Photo)

Speakers during the Vietnamese language sessions included Executive Director Christian Phan Phước Lành of Gulf Breeze, Fla.; Union President Peter Lê Hồng Phúc, pastor of Vietnamese Faith Baptist Church of Dallas; Henry Phan Minh Hội of Gilbert, Ariz., IMB's diaspora ministry coordinator; Hồ Thế Vũ, pastor of Thien-An True Living Church of Seattle; Đặng Quy Thế, pastor of Vietnamese Baptist Church of Fort Worth in Haltom City and president of the Union's prayer ministry.; Bryant Wright of Marietta, Ga., president of NAMB's Send Relief; and Đỗ Đăng Phú, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church of Lake City, Ga.

Worship was led in the Vietnamese services by Duy Tran of Garland, Texas, and in the English services by Isaiah Hua, youth leader of Vietnamese Gwinnet Church in Suwanee, Ga.

Reports, business, worship and workshops comingled with preaching, along with generous blocks of time for fellowship

‘Came to be encouraged’

Alib Cil of Montagnard Alliance Church in Charlotte, N.C., told Baptist Press he’s a student at the Vietnamese Baptist Theological Seminary, and “came to be encouraged.”

Peter Nguyen of Vietnamese Baptist Church in High Point, N.C. said this was his 25th year to attend the union’s annual meeting. He does so for “the reunion,” he said. He also likes to help, he said, as he moved cases of bottled water in place for the next meal.

The organization needed for the event was managed by a 12-person team led by Phuong Khuu of San Diego. More than 150 volunteers worked in registration, tech support, food services and other arrangements.

Two hours before each meal, packaged hot meals and individual containers of soup started arriving—at least four entrees totaling at least 1,200 servings per meal came in from area Vietnamese restaurants.

“Vietnamese food is ‘comfort food’ especially to the first generation,” Phan said. “I am always amazed how smooth is the process. It starts with good organization, making sure there is enough of everything, even napkins.”

Displays include one for a Bible study in the Vietnamese language, books from various authors as well as one for the Vietnamese Baptist Theological Seminary. Seminary President Tran Liru Chuyen told Baptist Press the school has 100 students in the United States and 600 in Vietnam, with classes on Zoom so students can study as they serve where they live.

The Vietnamese Union’s missions entity also was represented. The group raises up church planters in Vietnam and connects them with existing churches, so they don’t have to be vetted by the communist government.

Began with time of prayer

The event began July 3 with an evening prayer night and prayer walk going out from Emmanuel Baptist Church in Lake City, an Atlanta suburb.

“We want to start our annual meeting with God through prayer,” Phan said. “Prayer night and prayer walk are not only a good tradition to keep but also an attitude of submission to God alone.”

During a business session, the group elected Phu Do, Sr. Pastor of Emmanuel Vietnamese Baptist Church in Lake City, Ga., as first vice president.

They approved a \$550,000 budget, unchanged from last year. It includes line items of Vietnamese Theological Baptist Seminary, Vietnamese Mission Board, Women’s Ministry, Men’s Ministry, English Ministry, Prayer Ministry, Training Ministry, and a Pastor Retreat.

Next year will be the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first Vietnamese refugees to the United States. The meeting is set for July 3-6, 2025, in Los Angeles.

“This year’s annual meeting was wonderful, beyond our expectations,” Phan said. “The sermons were excellent. The service spirit of the registration committee, technical committee, culinary committee, and worship committee was very dedicated.

“The people responded strongly to the call for financial giving,” the executive director added. “The youth and children attended in great numbers. Everything is a gift from God and all glory to him.”