



Tom Barrett  
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, FACHE  
Commissioner of Health

Sandra J. Rotar  
Health Operations Administrator

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MEDIA ADVISORY**

**Mayor Barrett to Mark 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Strong Baby Sabbath**

*City officials partner with area faith leaders to support families and reduce infant deaths*

MILWAUKEE – On Sunday, Oct. 11, Mayor Tom Barrett and Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker will mark Milwaukee’s 5<sup>th</sup> annual Strong Baby Sabbath by visiting area churches to share a message of support for families. A collaboration with Columbia St. Mary’s Hospital and the faith community, the Strong Baby Sabbath asks churches to partner in a day of raising awareness of the top two preventable causes of infant death in Milwaukee: Premature births and unsafe sleeping environments.

“In Milwaukee, too many infants die because they are born too small, too soon,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “Our faith leaders are instrumental in providing support to their neighborhoods that can help reduce risk factors and connect people to resources. We invite every place of worship to join us this year in sharing a collective message that will help more Milwaukee babies be born strong babies and live to celebrate their first birthdays.”

On average, 100 Milwaukee infants die before their first birthdays, with nearly 60 percent of all infant deaths and 66 percent of African-American infant deaths a result of complications of prematurity. Additionally, half of the approximately 15 sleep-related infant deaths in Milwaukee occur to infants who were born prematurely, making prematurity a significant risk factor for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and accidental suffocation.

The effort supports the goal of reducing Milwaukee’s overall infant mortality rate by 10 percent and the African-American infant mortality rate by 15 percent by 2017 set by Mayor Barrett and supported by the Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families at United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County.

The Strong Baby Sabbath is planned cooperatively by Columbia St. Mary’s Urban Church Wellness Program, City of Milwaukee Health Department, March of Dimes Wisconsin Chapter, and the Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families at United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County. The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) Northwest Jurisdiction and General Baptist State Convention of Wisconsin Inc. also support the day.

**Schedule of church appearances:**

- 10 a.m. Bradford Memorial AME Church  
4260 N. Teutonia Ave., Milwaukee WI 53209**
- 10:45 a.m. Village Ministry Inc.  
2614 W. Center St., Milwaukee WI 53205**

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