



**American Baptist Churches of the Rochester/Genesee Region**  
**Winter Delegates Meeting**  
**Saturday, February 7, 2026 - Virtually via Zoom**

Delegates from the member churches of the American Baptist Churches of the Rochester/Genesee Region met via Zoom on Saturday, February 7, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. EDT.

**1) Opening Worship**

Opening worship began with a recording of “This Little Light of Mine” followed by a reading from Matthew 5:13-20 by Soe Win, Region Vice President and Chair of the Connectional Life Team. The Rev. Karen Mendes, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Burlington, Vermont, and member of the Executive Board delivered an inspiring message about our Baptist roots and standing up for religious liberty. She highlighted the legacy of John Leland, a Baptist minister who was instrumental in codifying freedom of religion in the Bill of Rights. Rev. Mendes urged us to act in accordance with our faith and our history, reminding us that as children of God as are called to share God’s love.

**2) Call to Order and Roll Call of Churches**

The Reverend Jason Alspaugh, President, called the meeting to order. Region Clerk Anne Farrell announced that 33 people were in attendance, representing 20 churches of which 17 had delegates present; therefore, a quorum was established.

**3) Acceptance of Minutes**

On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the November 1, 2025 Delegates Meeting were accepted as distributed.

**4) Financial Report**

Treasurer Beverly Murrell-Frasier presented highlights from the Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet for the period ending December 31, 2025, reporting that the Region’s financial position continues to be positive. The delegates were reminded that, at the behest of the Finance and Investment Committee, Lilly grant funds were invested in two CDs, the first of which matured last fall, yielding \$13,000 in interest. The second CD is due to mature in February, and the Finance and Investment Committee will consider whether to reinvest the principal to gain additional interest before the grant funds are to be disbursed. The Lilly Endowment does not restrict the use of interest gained. At present, the earnings are being reserved for Thriving Congregations Initiative expenses in the event of a shortfall in grant funding. At the conclusion of the project, any remaining funds may be designated to support operations.

Beverly advised that she is in the process of creating a narrative format of the financial statements to simplify how the information is presented at future meetings. It was also noted that the annual external financial review is underway. On a motion duly made and seconded, the Treasurer’s report was accepted with gratitude.

**5) President’s Report**

Rev. Alspaugh reported that he is focusing on strengthening ties within the Region. He is meeting with the Executive Board teams, noting that he appreciates shared leadership and the ways in which team members are sharing their gifts. Implementing consensus decision-making at the Executive Board level and delegates meetings continues to be a goal. Jason stated that he is also looking forward to RGR hosting the ABCUSA Biennial in June 2027.

## 6) Associate Executive Minister's Report

Rev. Alicia Dixon-Garrard, Associate Executive Minister, presented the following update.

**a) Thriving Congregations Initiative** – Several churches in Cohort 1 have not yet concluded their work; monthly meetings are being held to assist them in finalizing plans for implementation of their project. Cohort 2 is flourishing. The information session for churches interested in applying for Cohort 3 is scheduled for February 26 at 7 p.m. There is space for eleven churches to participate; applications will be available in March.

### b) Region Priorities Collaboratives

1. The Mental Health Collaborative has been active since the fall. On February 28 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the collaborative is sponsoring mental health first aid training, which will be held virtually. The goal is for at least one person from member church to be trained and certified to provide mental health first aid.
2. The Antiracism Collaborative has also been active since the fall. The second event sponsored by the collaborative titled “Being Human Together” will be held February 16. Goals include identifying what the Region can do to bridge the gap.
3. The Ecojustice Collaborative has been on hiatus; however, it is anticipated that meetings will restart in the spring. Plans are being made to have the Reverend Betsy Sowers, Minister for Earth Justice at Old Cambridge Baptist Church, present a program titled “The Theological Foundations of Creation Care and Ecojustice” in March or April. The collaborative will also be studying what our indigenous sisters and brothers can teach us about caring for the creation.

New members have been recruited to each collaborative; however, key facilitators are needed for each to sustain their work.

### c) Affinity Groups

1. Rochester/Genesee Clergy – In person and virtual gatherings were held in late January, and the group will continue meeting quarterly. Providing community/companionship and resources to improve skills are among the ways the Region can support clergy, and clergy are encouraged to share other ways the Region can support them. Plans are being made for a clergy retreat in May in conjunction with the spring delegates gathering.
2. Women of the Roc(hester/Genesee) & Jesus! – Plans are being made to reestablish a chapter of American Baptist Women's Ministries. A field trip to the Women's Rights Museum in Seneca Falls is scheduled for April 11. Details will be available on the RGR website.
3. LGBTQIA+ Community – Collaborating with Rev. Brian Henderson, Executive Director, Association of Welcome & Affirming Baptists (AWAB) to plan a series of talks. Coordinating monthly “Queer Clergy Conversations” in cooperation with AWAB.
4. Retired Clergy – Reaching out to learn how the Region can support retired clergy. An invitation will be sent in the near future.

## 7) Executive Minister's Report

The Rev. Dr. Sandra Hasenauer recently completed the second portion of her sabbatical. The first was taken over the summer, during which time she assumed the duties of Executive Director at Cameron Community Ministries to stabilize the organization as it was recruiting for a new Executive Director. As the organization moves forward under new leadership, Rev. Hasenauer felt it best to step back from her involvement; she resigned from the Board of Directors, effective December 1, 2025. Sandy expressed gratitude that the Region has a sabbatical policy, which provided her with a much needed respite from her responsibilities as Executive Minister. She urged member churches that do not currently provide sabbaticals to pastoral leadership adopt similar policies, noting she can provide additional information.

Sandy highlighted the benefits of adding an Associate Executive Minister position to the staff. As outlined in her report, Rev. Dixon-Garrard has invigorated the collaboratives that were created to address the delegates' priorities for the Region and is creating networking opportunities to provide support for clergy and other affinity groups. This is in addition to her responsibilities as Project Coordinator for the Thriving Congregations Initiative. Sandy stated that building the financial foundation necessary to maintain this position when grant funds are no longer available is a priority. This includes promoting donations via Circle of Friends solicitations, as well as giving to the Abundant Blessings Campaign, in coordination with the American Baptist Foundation, to increase the Region's endowment.

Sandy continued by noting that Foundation representatives are available to assist member churches in establishing endowments; some Region churches have already used these services. Sandy reported that the Rev. Dr. Christing Roush, CEO of the American Baptist Foundation, will be visiting Rochester in late April and plans are being made for her to conduct a workshop at the May delegates gathering.

Focusing on her supervisory and coordinating role, as well as assisting with filling vacancies on the Executive Board and its teams to address RGR's goals were noted as priorities. Sandy also reported that she is working closely with Treasurer Beverly Murrell-Frasier on Region finances.

Sandy reported that nine member churches currently have searches underway, eight for pastors and one for an associate. Much of her time is being spent assisting the search committees in identifying candidates. She stated that the denomination recently made software changes, which makes this process more challenging, especially in an environment where there is already a shortage of qualified candidates. On a positive note, RGR has numerous individuals who are currently in the ordination process.

Plans for hosting the ABCUSA Biennial in June 2027 are in process. Tasha Watson, Rochester First Baptist, and Ciara Lilly, St. Luke Missionary Baptist in Charlotte, are co-chairing the Local Arrangements Committee and additional committee members are being recruited. The Region's 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will also be celebrated during the Biennial.

## **8) Proposed Bylaws Amendments – First Reading**

An amendment to the bylaws that would allow the Region to hold annual meetings rather than biennial meetings was presented. The reason for doing so is to address the expressed desire to gather more frequently to create stronger ties within the Region. Making this change would affect the terms of Executive Board members and officers. Rather than Board members serving one four-year term, they would serve a three-year term with the option of serving a second consecutive three-year term. Therefore, one-third of the Board would rotate off each year. Currently, half the Board rotates off the Board every two years. Officers currently serve two years with the option of serving a second consecutive two-year term. This would be amended to increase their terms to three years. Another proposed amendment involving church delegates would continue to have churches represented by two lay delegates but would allow a third delegate to be from the pastoral staff, no longer exclusively the pastor. A reference to Roberts' Rules of Order would also be deleted, as their inclusion could create confusion and their inclusion in the bylaws is not required.

Delegates were reminded that this was a first reading; the plan is to present the amendments to the delegates at the May meeting, using a consensus decision-making process for their adoption. Feedback included support for the three-year terms and implementation of consensus decision-making. It was recommended that allowing a hybrid format for the annual meeting be included in the amendments. The final draft will be distributed well in advance of the next meeting to provide adequate time for review prior to considering their adoption. Delegates were invited to forward suggestions for clarifications to Sandy before the draft is finalized.

**9) Sharing from Congregations/Adjournment**

Rick Mixon was welcomed as Lake Avenue Baptist Church's Interim Pastor. He asked for prayers and expressed gratitude his RGR colleagues in Minneapolis, Rev. Doug Donley at University Baptist Church and Rev. Travis Norvell at Judson Memorial Baptist Church, as they respond to the immigration enforcement efforts in their city. Similar prayers were requested for Rev. Alspaugh's hometown of Springfield, Ohio, and thanks was given for all who are finding ways to help vulnerable neighbors in this difficult time. Prayers were offered for the unsheltered and for places that are opening warming centers this winter.

Rev. Hasenauer offered a closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Anne E. Farrell, Clerk