



**American Baptist Churches of the Rochester/Genesee Region**  
**Winter Delegates Meeting**  
**Saturday, February 3, 2024**  
**Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham, NC**  
**and Virtually via Zoom**

Delegates from the member churches of the American Baptist Church of the Rochester/Genesee Region met Saturday, February 3, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. EST in person at Watts Baptist Church, Durham, North Carolina and virtually via Zoom.

**1) Opening Worship – Planned by the Executive Board Connectional Life Team**

Jason Alspaugh, Connectional Life Team Chair, introduced the opening hymn, a rendition of “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee” recorded at Judson Memorial Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Reverend Dan Brockway of Brockport First Baptist, Brockport, New York offered an opening prayer. The Reverend Tanya Spencer, Pastor, Good Shepherd Community of Faith, Orchard Park, New York, and Executive Board President, read a passage of scripture from Mark 9:2-9 (Jesus’ transfiguration). The Reverend Dorisanne Cooper, Senior Minister, Watts Street Baptist Church, delivered an inspirational message. Tanya Thurman, a member of Second Baptist Church, Mumfordsville, New York offered a word of blessing and closing prayer. The closing hymn was “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah,” accompanied by a recording from West Henrietta Baptist Church, West Henrietta, New York.

**2) Roll Call of Churches**

Anne Farrell, Secretary, announced that representatives of twenty-one (21) churches were in attendance; therefore, a quorum was established.

**3) Acceptance of Minutes**

On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the September 9, 2023 Fall Delegates Meeting were accepted.

**4) Election of Executive Board Member**

Nominating Committee Chair, the Reverend Steve Brotzman, presented Gregg Goodman as a candidate for election to the Executive Board. It was noted that the Executive Board concurs with the Nominating Committee’s recommendation that Mr. Goodman be elected to fill an unexpired term and that he would be eligible for re-election at the end of the current term. Gregg is a retired recreation and parks professional and member of the First Baptist Church of Penfield, New York where he serves on the Tech Team. The delegates voted unanimously to elect Gregg Goodman to fill the vacant Executive Board seat. With Mr. Goodman’s election, the Board has a full complement of members.

**5) Financial Report**

Treasurer Scott McClellan reviewed the financials, noting that, at the half-year mark, revenue is at 76% of budget. The fiscal year 2024 budget anticipated a \$30,000 deficit; however, revenue currently exceeds projected revenue by \$52,000. The excess revenue is primarily due to the receipt of proceeds from the closure of Baptist Temple, as well as the Palmer Grant; however, even without these one-time receipts, general support would be approximately 50% of budget.

Scott continued with a review of the Statement of Financial Position, reporting that the organization had assets approximating \$1.6 million and no significant liabilities. Investments have performed well since the beginning of the year. The Reverend Sandy Hasenauer, Executive Minister, pointed out that most of the \$1.6 million is restricted in its use and cannot be accessed for day-to-day operations.

Sandy explained that the Palmer Grant is intended to provide grants of \$5,000 to five churches to plan and implement initiatives to adapt to post-pandemic realities. Applications are due February 28, 2024. Pastors were sent a notice that these funds are available and details for how to apply are posted on RGR's website.

#### **6) Status of FBC Keystone**

Sandy announced that First Baptist Church of Keystone in Citrus Park, Florida has withdrawn from the denomination. She noted that Brandall Branch, who was in attendance, was ordained by FBC Keystone and now resides in Virginia. Although the church has withdrawn, Brandell wishes to remain connected with the Region.

#### **7) Church Application for Membership**

Abundant Life Faith Center in Rochester, New York has applied for membership in the Rochester/Genesee Region. Sandy has been in conversation with Pastor Arthur Dilbert about the church's desire to become a member; representatives of the Executive Board met with Pastor Dilbert and church leaders to discuss membership; and the Executive Board has recommended approval of Abundant Life Faith Center's membership. It was noted that the membership application was made available to the delegates for review in advance of the meeting. Pastor Dilbert and Sharon Dilbert were in attendance virtually and briefly shared on behalf of the church. There being no questions about the application, the delegates unanimously approved admitting the Abundant Life Faith Center as a member church, as recommended by the Executive Board. Pastor Dilbert expressed the church's gratitude and noted that they look forward to walking alongside the churches of the Rochester/Genesee Region.

#### **8) Lay Ministry Certification Guidelines**

The Rochester/Genesee Region has been one of the few ABCUSA regions that does not have a process for certifying lay ministers. Lay ministry certification is not a substitute for ordination; however, individuals with certification can be listed in the ABCUSA Professional Registry with that designation. Dr. Gaya Shakes, Chair of the Ordination Review Committee (ORC), reviewed the Lay Ministry Certification Guidelines that have been developed and recommended for approval by the ORC. She noted that the Region will not offer a Lay Ministry Study Program, rather coursework completed through pre-approved programs will be accepted. Gaya entertained questions, including how long it would take to complete the certification process. It was noted that it would depend on the candidate and whether some of the coursework has already been completed. The pre-approved programs can be completed in three years. In response to a question relative to legality, specifically as it relates to officiating at weddings, Sandy noted that it would depend on the laws of each state. In New York any person associated with a recognized religious body may perform marriages. It was also noted that lay ministers can participate in MMBB. After further discussion, the delegates approved the Lay Ministry Guidelines, as recommended.

#### **9) Abundant Blessings Campaign**

Sandy provided background information about the Abundant Blessings Fund, an endowment established to support the entire ministry of ABCRGR. It is intended to provide an ongoing and flexible source of funds to ensure that there is staff and other resources to meet the needs of member congregations and clergy.

Gifts to the Abundant Blessings Fund may be designated to one or more of four sub-funds: Equipping Leaders, Emerging Ministries, Mutual Assistance, and Heidi Fuller. Gifts may also be undesignated. A small portion of all gifts go to ministry support. A campaign is being launched in partnership with the American Baptist Foundation to increase this fund.

Sandy introduced Kris Lutton from the American Baptist Foundation who presented an overview of the Foundation's work that focuses on connecting people who care to ministries that matter. Foundation representatives provide assistance with gift cultivation and planned giving. They help raise awareness about including the church or other ministries in one's will. The Abundant Blessings Campaign includes a planned giving option. Sandy noted that the Foundation is not allowed to share information with beneficiaries; therefore, the Region would only be aware of planned gifts if individuals share that information directly.

Sandy emphasized that in any fundraising effort, she always urges potential donors to consider giving to the local church first before giving to the Region. Questions for Kris can be directed to her email at [Kris.Lutton@abc-usa.org](mailto:Kris.Lutton@abc-usa.org).

#### **10) Adjournment**

President Tanya Spencer offered a closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Anne E. Farrell*

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Secretary