

**State of the Region
October 2011 Annual Meeting
Report from Rev. Dr. Arlo R. Reichter, Executive Minister**

For the first time the Annual Gathering is being held at the Open Door Baptist Church in Tomah, Wisconsin. For the third year the annual meeting is being “deployed” to different areas of the state. We appreciate the hospitality of Open Door and its pastor, Mark Pittman. In 2012 the gathering will be hosted by the Whiting Community Baptist Church in Neenah October 12 & 13. Thirty Wisconsin Baptists from 13 congregations participated in the ABCUSA Biennial in San Juan, Puerto Rico in June. This included 4 youth delegates. In 2013 the Biennial will be held in Overland Park, Kansas.

Congregations and Pastors: Retiring in 2010 were: **Gene Van Galder, Beloit-First; Jim Schmitz, Neenah-Whiting;** and **Rolen Womack, Milwaukee-Progressive.** **Walter Lanier (Central Baptist Theological Seminary/Wisconsin Class of 2011)** was called as pastor for **Milwaukee-Progressive.** **Mark Vincent, Beloit-First** and **Steve Hartman, Neenah-Whiting** were called as interim pastors. Two new church plants have emerged: **Beloit-Church of the Living Water, Gene Bell**-pastor and **Milwaukee-Unlimited Life in Jesus Christ Church, Sudie Jones** (CBTS/Wisconsin student)-pastor.

Region Leadership: We are blessed with effective leadership throughout the region. Lay leaders and pastors serve in and through congregations and community organizations week in and week out. There are those who serve as region officers, board, committee and commission members. In addition, others serve ABC-related ministries such as the Milwaukee Christian Center, Project Focal Point, Housing Ministries of American Baptists in Wisconsin, Wayland Foundation, campus ministries in Eau Claire, La Crosse, Milwaukee and Madison, and the American Baptist Assembly/Green Lake Conference Center. Thousands of volunteer hours are given annually in support of the ministry of Camp Tamarack. We further recognize chaplains in hospitals, care centers, jails and prisons. Wisconsin Baptists have a significant ministry presence.

Region Staff: On December 31, 2011 **Jane Mathison** will retire after five years as Director of Camping Ministries. Under her leadership American Baptist participation has grown and an increased number of other user groups became involved. As of January 1, 2012, **Carolyn Dugan** (a member of Green Lake-Federated and CBTS/Wisconsin student) will assume responsibilities as the Director of Camping Ministries. The on-going service of **Sam Brink, Mark and Deb Lembke, Betsy Kelnhofer** and **Kris Tontis of Tontis Accounting, LLC** is deeply appreciated. **Sandy Cope** continues as our office volunteer and annual meeting coordinator; she is an important component of our staff.

Emerging Ministry: **Sam Brink** continued his work with pastors and congregations in the area of transformation for ministry and mission. This has been a focus of his regional work since 2000. Through Sam Brink’s efforts a \$25,000 grant was received from the Palmer Trust Fund of the American Baptist Foundation to expand this work with congregations and pastors. **Milwaukee-New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, Archie Ivy**-pastor, held an event in cooperation with the American Baptist Home Mission Societies and ABC/Wisconsin on the theme of emerging ministries.

Moving Forward in a Downward Economy: Everyone faces financial stress these days and many would say “this is not new, we’ve faced difficulty before” and they are correct, of course. We seek efficiencies in our region budget. The Small Business Health Insurance Tax Credit brought ABC/WI a benefit of \$6,400. An e-mail was sent from the region office to each church and several took advantage of the benefit. The sale of 9.78 acres of land at Camp Tamarack to the Department of Natural Resources for

\$109,000 will expand the state nature preserve and increase the camp endowment fund. It also eliminates a portion of the camp property tax bill—the total benefit in 2012 will total around \$6,500. The increased use of the camp also has a positive benefit as we come closer to paying the cost of camp with camp income. Since its inception the seminary extension has paid its own way and now contributes to indirect costs. Giving to United Mission is still in decline as churches face economic uncertainty.

Camp Tamarack: **Mark Lembke**, Site Manager, coordinated the renovation of Cabin 5, waterfront improvements and the first phase of the renovation of Basile Retreat Center prior to the 2011 season. **Deb Lembke**, Receptionist, worked alongside Mark in cleaning and preparing the camp for rentals.

A quiet, successful effort to raise \$60,000 to complete Phase Two of the Basile Retreat Center renovation that will include the installation of private bath facilities in each of the six guest rooms was fully funded by April 30th. A \$30,000 matching challenge gift was made by a friend of the camp and other supporters gave an additional \$30,000 by the deadline. The renovation will be completed for the 2012 season. With this improvement Basile Retreat Center will be especially conducive to adult groups.

Central Baptist Theological Seminary/Wisconsin: Three American Baptists received the Master of Divinity degree in the Class of 2011: **Jacqueline Colbert, Madison-Mt. Zion; Walter Lanier, Milwaukee-Calvary (now pastor of Milwaukee-Progressive)** and **Christina Ettinger, Waukesha-First**. The program name was changed from “The Milwaukee Centre” to “CBTS/Wisconsin” in recognition of the fact that students come from a wide number of communities: Madison, Belgium, Pewaukee, Milwaukee, Randolph, Richland Center, Burlington, Racine, Waukesha.

In June 2011 CBTS/Wisconsin received a site visit from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities. Our accreditation was affirmed. The center was also approved for Federal Student Direct Loans for the first time. This will be a great benefit to our students. **Timothy R. Ashley**, site director, participates via computer in the CBTS faculty meetings.

The CBTS faculty (Shawnee, Wisconsin and the Tennessee site director) gathered August 18-20 in Milwaukee for the annual retreat. A focus of the visit was the theme “urbanized ministry”. This included a presentation by **Carmen Porco** and was hosted by Housing Ministries of American Baptists in Wisconsin.

American Baptist Assembly/Green Lake Conference Center: One of the questions I am asked frequently is “do the Baptists still own Green Lake”. The short answer is “yes”. In the 1970’s ABC Board of Educational Ministries turned the ownership over to a locally elected Board of Directors which has a membership from across the country. A high majority of the board must be American Baptist. I am concluding my sixth year and final year on the board as a representative of the ABC Executive Ministers Council. This year I have also served on the Presidential Search Committee. The new President/CEO recently named is Ben Mott who currently serves as a Vice President at ABA/GLCC. A pro-active plan has been put in place by the board, with the full support of Mr. Mott, to move ABA/GLCC closer to ABC once again.

Thank you for the continuing privilege of serving as your Executive Minister.