Rooted in and for Collaboration

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Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (ESV)

In 2017 American Baptists in Wisconsin considered our work together within the frame of “rootedness”—not only looking backward into our history as a particular expression of Christian faith and how this informs us today, but also assessing the depth of our contemporary witness and work and considering root causes of the concerns of our day. These things seemed to culminate in our learning, interactions, and conversations at our Annual Gathering (AG) in early October. It was rich.

In the following month I had two particular opportunities that shifted me into the thought, “rooted in and for collaboration” (in progression from the AG theme “Rooted In and Living Through Christ.”)* I had my first visit to the First Baptist Church in America (Providence, RI), and learned more about our fore-father, Roger Williams. One thing that stood out to me among the various readings of religious liberty and soul freedom was that these were pursuits in the context of community—community beyond one local group of believers. This early presence of the associational principal came alive for me at the second opportunity—a network event of several ABC regions, sharing ideas and wisdom with the goal of seeking new collaborations.

We live in the balance—sometimes tension—between exercising our freedoms and voluntarily associating with others. Our shared rootedness calls us together yet our breadth, our creativity often strains our interactions. The above verses from Hebrews 10 lays out for us a hopeful way. In 2018, as a region we will shift our frame to our stated value of “collaboration.” Let us stir up one another to love and good works.