

## “STATE OF THE REGION”

American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin, October 13, 2018 Annual Meeting, Staff Reports  
“Together Living Faithfully Through Christ Today” | Ephesians 3:18-19

**Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri, Regional Executive Minister** | [marie.o@abcofwi.org](mailto:marie.o@abcofwi.org)

**Opening Reflection:** Quadrennium - a period of four years: I have used this term in this region before, referring to the region’s current strategic priorities and initiatives beginning in 2017 and anticipating implementation through 2020. We are drawing near to “mid-term,” and I am pleased to say that we are living into this plan well, making progress even as we remain open to the unplanned opportunities and needs that we often run into with God’s work. Following are some *highlights*:

### **Church and Ministerial Resourcing**

We have seen several **pastoral transitions** in our member churches, elevating the need for resourcing for the interim period. The **Circuit Project** began implementation, developing an “in-house” team to work collaboratively with churches during the church self-study stage. The team will work with select churches during this launch of the project, based on the church’s own investment in intentional discernment about its future purposes and vitality. We also are redefining a relationship with long-standing ministry partner, **Design Group International** (a nationwide ministry/leadership consulting group based in WI), to broaden the network of support and resources we offer to congregations in transition.

The **Commission on Congregational Mission** offered their first web conference, hoping to encourage churches in collaborative ministries within their communities; they have upcoming plans to discuss other topics. The **Commission on Ministry** supports congregations as they acknowledge individuals who are called into vocational ministry and who are pursuing licensing, ordination, or recognition of ordination from other denominations. This past year they also have been proactively addressing important concerns regarding clergy ethics and conduct and support of newly ordained ABC clergy.

The region staff implemented another round of **Minister Meet-ups**, highlighting leadership topics such as sabbath, pastoral authority, and cultivating difficult conversations within congregations across ideological, cultural, and racial differences, with over 50 in combined attendance throughout the series.

In time for annual gathering, we have published a **revised compiled list of ministries of our churches**, based on submitted 2017 annual report supplemental forms. This resource is intended to **encourage churches to collaborate** with one another in common mission, and to help identify the kinds of support, resources, and networks churches might need for strengthening their ministries. **Thank you** to all the churches who submitted their information; we hope this will be helpful to you.

We have continued to develop our **website** ([www.abcofwi.org](http://www.abcofwi.org)) as a **central resource** of a broad range of information available to you at any time: staff articles; upcoming events; organizational documents, contact information of regional staff and elected leaders, mission support guidelines, job and volunteer opportunities, links to our ministry partners, scholarship information, church mission stories, and more.

### **The POST/Innovative Initiatives**

The **POST (online faith community)** continues to meet regularly via Zoom video conferencing, building intimate community and fostering thoughtful discipleship. In this past year we had several topical series topics that were led by different POST members (Signs of Advent, Foolish Love Lenten series, Brave Conversations, and guest speakers on the topic of addiction). The group has begun exploring steps to become a recognized member church of ABC/WI and is always ready to welcome new individuals.

This area of regional ministry (the POST) is also inclusive of other initiatives that experiment with alternative ways of approaching ministry. Having received a generous legacy donation through the closing

of Eau Claire, First, we established the “**New Wineskins**” endowment fund to encouraging the birthing of new ministries. We will launch an experimental grant program, funded by this endowment, with a “Day of Missional Innovation” in 2019, where speakers will address how to take a vision and bring it to fruition and how to build financial support for new ministry endeavors; we will also provide hands-on guidance for those hoping to submit a grant application.

**Camping and Education:** *See following staff reports.*

### **Support Areas:**

Staff: Our staff continues to grow into each of our expanding roles and into the changing culture of our regional office; at the same we continue to have staff transitions. This year, we said farewell to **Betsy Kelnhofer** and most recently **Dawn Armstrong**. We welcomed **Sean Cornell**. With our various areas of ministries, we are still discerning how our staff’s passions and giftedness match up with the needs; this is part of our commitment to be good stewards of our regional funds, knowing that human resources are a considerable portion of our budgeted expenses.

Governance: Great strides have been made on the **governance redesign**. The Governance Task Force and the Board of Managers has a solid proposal to present at the 2018 annual gathering, with room for final revisions in the following months. A vote is scheduled for the 2019 annual meeting for revised Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws that we will prove to be a stronger framework for our mission work.

**Closing Reflection:** This past August I completed my first “quadrennium” as REM; four years is my personal natural time frame for deep reflection. I continue to experience great joy from and inspiration for this ministry. God gives me eyes to see some forward movement, individuals with growing interest in associational interactions, expanding possibilities for gospel work, churches with deep commitment to American Baptist related mission matched with overflowing generosity, new and deepening relationships. These glimpses, gifts from God, balance the very real challenges of ministry. I am thankful for all those who I know pray for me and for our region. I need it, even as I pray and hope for you.

***Collaboration beckons us together; may we be brave, and may God be glorified.***

Other Admin Staff: Sean Cornell—Office Administrator; Jim Carlson—Hispanic Church Liaison; Ericka Davis—Communications/Technology



Congregations and Pastors: **Completed:** Scott Jorgensen—Hudson, First; Jerry Amstutz—Janesville, First; Lalpek Lian—Milw, Emmanuel Chin; Phineas Marr—Kenosha, First; Eric Lundquist—Beloit, First, (Interim). **Beginning:** Brandle Morrow—Milw, Metropolitan (Pastor, formerly Interim); Walter Hoshaw—Beloit, First (Pastor); John Czech—Hudson, First (Interim)

New Churches: Milw, Penial Karen Baptist Church, Laku Htoo La (Pastor)

Church Closings: Berlin, Federated; Milw, Unlimited Life in Jesus Christ; Eau Claire, First; Milw, Broken Walls

Organizations and Directors: **Beginning:** Mallory Moore, Madison, The Crossing Campus Ministry

Milestone Celebrations (communicated with the region office): **Church Anniversaries:** Eau Claire, First—157<sup>th</sup>; Wyocena, Community—165<sup>th</sup>. **Ordinations:** Dallas Flippin—Brookfield, Immanuel. **Retirements:** JoAnn Schlobaski—Berlin, Federated. **Graduations:** Marcus Allen (DMin)—Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary; Amos Green (MDiv), Reginald Ivy (MDiv)—CENTRAL Wisconsin; Lalpek Lian (DMin)—Central Seminary

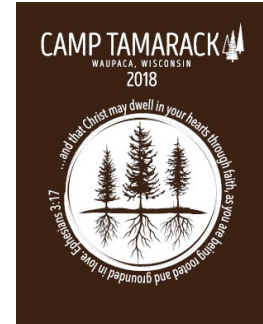
In Memoriam: John Eilertson—Ministry Partner (Refugee Resettlement); Mary Link—ABC/WI; Merlin W. Bradley—Hudson, First; Tommie L. Mims—Milwaukee, Calvary; Llewellyn S. Walker—Delavan, First.

## STAFF REPORTS

**Rev. Carolyn Dugan, Associate Regional Minister – Camping | [carolyn.dugan@abcofwi.org](mailto:carolyn.dugan@abcofwi.org)**

**Rev. Kim Drost, Assistant Ministry – Camping: Facilities and Guest Services | [kim.drost@abcofwi.org](mailto:kim.drost@abcofwi.org)**

If you have been following the Camp Tamarack business FaceBook page or Instagram feed, you have seen some of the #campconfessions that have been posted. Some examples are: “Camp is the first place people liked me for being me”, “That’s the magic of camp. It gets ahold of your heart and never lets go” and “Camp is my happy place”.



We first want to thank everyone who has supported camp to make it the place it is by taking care of the physical needs, the volunteer needs, and by supporting campers and being renters of the space. Taking care of the camp property, rentals, and campers is a huge job. Kim and I could not do this without the support of the Region, churches and individuals who value the mission of Camp Tamarack.

Some of the highlights of the year have been:

- The launch of the new website with the help of Rev. Brian Hastings. Check it out at [www.camptamarack.org](http://www.camptamarack.org).
- Upgrade to the Basile Retreat Center experience with linens provided so you can spend time retreating and not go home to do laundry.
- Campers planted Tamarack trees on the property as part of the Camp theme this summer: Rootedness. There were some powerful moments as campers realized the connection of leaving a piece of themselves at camp.
- Attempted collaboration with Rawhide to replace the roof on the Basile Retreat Center.
- 114 campers attended Region-sponsored camps along with 20 campers for a youth camp organized by several of our Hispanic congregations.
- A new offering of Tamarack Tales that highlighted our connection to creation and our responsibility of caring for the Earth, using science with expert guests talking about bees, prairies, and water. Plus, there was a game about turtles!
- With the closing of Camp Grow in the Green Lake, WI area, we have forged new partnerships with rental groups from the Chicago area as well as began work with the ABC Metro Chicago Region to discern how their camping needs might be met in collaboration with us.
- A Camp Collaborative group for the summer camp Directors and Pastors was created to share ideas and ask questions as they prepare for their week.
- “Spring into Camp” and “Fall out of Camp” volunteers who helped prepare for the different seasons.

We look forward to serving the Region of WI in the next year with our focus on *collaboration*.

## STAFF REPORTS

**Rev. Dr. John A. Jones IV, Associate Regional Minister – Education | [john.jones@abcofwi.org](mailto:john.jones@abcofwi.org)**

ROOTEDNESS – COLLABORATION – GROWTH – TRANSFORMATION

The year 2018 thus far has been characterized by learning and growth for the needs and responsibilities of regionwide educational ministries, particularly how the mission and purpose of the seminary site fits into those ministries. Enrollment for the M.Div. program is not what we would hope it to be, particularly in our effort to provide on-site options to complement the new remote delivery curriculum. Our goal for the January term (on-site) cohort was 10 students. We had 2 students. Our efforts in recruitment have not born the fruit we'd have hoped. We will learn from our recruiting results and try new methods, understanding that this transition will be a long-term process. Staff and leadership continue to provide extensive service and support of current students in their efforts to work their way through the curriculum toward completion and graduation.

Efforts to collaborate this year have helped reinforce the seminary site's identity as a "learning community" of not just students, but also faculty and alumni, in service to the ministries and churches of Southeastern Wisconsin. I understand preserving and extending that learning community to be my primary responsibility. Here are some of the ways that responsibility has been executed:

- Student Services: Advising and counsel for current students in negotiating both the form and content of the curriculum through electronic correspondence, direct meetings, and online platform meetings.
- Convocations: Students and Alumni (and some faculty) gathered in February and September
- Commencement & Commissioning: 2 M.Div. graduates and one D.Min. graduate were celebrated on May 12-13.
- Pastoral involvement: In January 2018, we hosted a dozen pastors and ministerial leaders for a guided reflection on theological education at the CERTIFICATE level as part of research conducted by the main seminary site.
- Hispanic Lay Institute: Thus far, the HLI has offered 3 courses with an average enrollment of 5 students in 2018. 2 students are on track to receive their certificate this May.
- Korean Program: A healthy Korean program cohort continues to use the classroom facilities in their own unique schedule. We coordinate scheduling, logistics, and legal requirements.
- I must note that Central Wisconsin Collaborative (CWC) has not been active because I have not called the group together. We will be gathering this fall with a renewed focus and some additional membership. CWC can be a great support for the seminary site and educational offerings in the region.

Additional activities:

- Programmatic offerings for pastors and students through the Minister Meet Ups platform
- Participation in the Governance Task Force
- Ex-officio participation in the Commission on the Ministry
- Supervision of coursework for Baptist Distinctives course – ordination candidate

It is an honor to serve in this capacity. My vision for this region work continues to sharpen through collaboration and conversation as well as through greater clarity of my own gifts and limitations. I covet your thoughts, hopes, and observations for what you believe education work in the region can and should be. Please keep that work in your prayers.

Other Education Staff:

*Minister Patrick Roberts, Assistant Minister—Education | [Patrick.roberts@abcofwi.org](mailto:Patrick.roberts@abcofwi.org)*

*Ms. Ericka Davis, Recruiter | [Ericka.davis@abcofwi.org](mailto:Ericka.davis@abcofwi.org)*