



THE WISCONSIN BAPTIST

Published by the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin



March 2021

A Pandemic of Opportunity

Jim Carlson - Hispanic Liaison

Many of you have heard the phrase “The dark winter of the pandemic” in recent weeks. Certainly we are facing one of the most difficult times we have faced in our lifetimes with the scourge of this current pandemic. Churches have also faced some of the most challenging times by exchanging the comfort of worship services in the sanctuary sitting next to longtime friends for a video streamed church service of our leaders while sitting in our homes. Many of us wonder about the long term effects on our churches’ health, financial situation, and attendance. Will we ever get back to church as we used to know it?

The answer is probably “no”, but that doesn’t mean the new situation will necessarily be worse than before. In fact, churches have had to adapt to newer technology which actually makes them more accessible to a larger audience. Church leaders are discovering the usefulness of making video streams of their worship services available online. Their worship services are now available to anyone in the world who has an internet connection. They are learning new ways to promote the gospel using social media and are able to offer more information to people who want to look for a church in their community.

This new opportunity is revolutionizing what we used to know as “church”, especially among the ethnic churches I serve. Our Hispanic and Burmese churches are often ahead of the curve when it comes to integrating technology in part because they tend to skew younger in age and are more familiar with it. Many of them can’t even remember a time when the internet was not the dominant form of communication in the world. They have people who are well versed in producing videos and posting online content. Immigrants have spent their lives adapting to new realities, so this kind of change is not overwhelming to them. Despite these challenges they are just as fervent in their faith as they were before, maybe more.

I think we can all learn something about adapting from these congregations. The Bible is full of stories about people who adapted their faith to new situations. From the Jews who were taken into exile by the Babylonians to Paul who spread the gospel to other nations, Christians have always and will always need to adapt. And we believe God blesses us in the new realities we face. This change in our definition of “church” is challenging, but it will also make us better at sharing the gospel if we are willing to follow the long Christian tradition of adapting. May God bless us all in this time of new opportunity.



Rev. Carolyn Dugan is glad to be back working with the staff and volunteers of Camp Tamarack!

Updated information on volunteer opportunities and summer programming coming soon to camp website: www.camptamarack.org, Instagram: @camptamarack_abc, and Facebook: Camp Tamarack – ABC of WI.

Please contact Carolyn at Carolyn.dugan@abcofwi.org or at 715-281-2269

PEOPLE & CHURCH NEWS

COMMISSIONS: The Commission on Ministry met in January and will be continuing to focus on the policies and procedures for ordination and recognition of ordination in the coming year as the needs of candidates and congregations continue to evolve.

The Commission on Congregational Mission has been meeting and has chosen the themes of Stewardship and Social Justice for their focus in 2021.

Commission meetings are posted to the ABC/WI Public Google Calendar, linked on the region website (abcofwi.org) under the "News & Events" tab.

PRAYERS FOR MYANMAR: Please keep the people of Myanmar, both here and in Myanmar, in your prayers. On February 1, the military detained the duly elected leaders of the country. There is a long and deep relationship between American Baptists and the people of Burma (now Myanmar). We call on all American Baptists to pray with and for our brothers and sisters in Christ that democracy be restored.

ANNUAL REPORTS: Please submit your Annual Report to the Region office by **March 31**. The Annual Report is one of the five criteria of cooperating churches for the Region. Additionally, the information provided, especially in this most peculiar year, helps the Region and ABC-USA in the broad pursuit of our common mission.



REGION OFFICE HOURS:
Monday-Thursday, 9 am-2 pm

Missed the Annual Gathering? Videos are available to share with church members. *Transformation continues!* bit.ly/ag2020abcwi