



The Wisconsin Baptist

Published by the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin

Summer Edition

Tuesday,
June 20,
2023

Rev. Dr. John Jones, Associate Regional Minister of Education

Where are you paying your attention?

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden to till it and keep it.

- *Genesis 2:15*

Over the last 10 years, I've been learning to garden. Each year I learn a little more. But every year I'm amazed at the growth that happens this time of year. I've come to love this period when the power of life springs forth with vigor and urgency. It really is amazing. Little seeds that I planted back in early April, I nurtured into seedlings. I've planted those seedlings which have now grown nearly to their full height. Blossoms are emerging to be followed by the fruit.. Soon I'll be watching and waiting for the fruit to ripen. This amazing growth seems like a magical gift that God gives every summer, if I can only pay attention.

Of course, I've had to pay attention throughout this magical process. I had to pay attention to the soil and do the work of turning it and preparing it before planting. I had to pay attention to the water, especially during those weeks in May and June when we had beautiful weather but very little rain. I still have to pay attention to weeds, plucking out the competition regularly to help my plants grow strong.

In paying attention, I had to do some specific work. But that work has not diminished my joy and amazement at the miraculous growth. When you pay attention, you often have to do some work to benefit from God's amazing design. God seems to invite us into God's process - if we can pay attention.

This summer, I'm trying extra hard to pay attention not only to the miracle of life bursting forth in my garden. I'm also trying to pay attention to what God is doing through and around me. I'm trying to pay attention to what God is growing in my life. Is there a new passion, a new opportunity, or a new friendship that I can notice, if I pay attention?



What will I need to do to participate in and appreciate what I notice that God is doing in my life? Will I need to add more time for reflection and prayer to my day? Will I need to prune away a habit that distracts and pacifies me but doesn't bring me joy? Will I need to step out of my comfort zone and risk vulnerability?

I like to say that "attention" is humanity's most valuable resource, more valuable than any currency. We "pay" our attention to what we care about most. As a parent - much less a gardener - I learn that lesson daily.

I recently saw a quotation by the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset: "Tell me to what you pay attention and I will tell you who you are."

I invite you to join me during this magical season of summer in paying attention to what God is doing in nature as well as to what God is doing and saying in your life. Pay attention to new things, growing things, happy things and even painful things. Realize that what you notice might require some additional work and tending for you to appreciate. But that's OK. That's how we participate in God's life.

Pay attention to the young people in your life. Our Annual Gathering in October will be focusing on Next Generation ministry. Tend to the potential leaders in your congregation and life. Do the work of encouraging them to join in your ministry. Invite them to Green Lake for our offerings. The miracle of new growth is around us if we can pay attention.

Important Dates ABC-WI Region

August 3 - ABC-WI Brewers Game
August 5 - Board Meeting
October 13-15 - Annual Gathering

Office Hours Regional Office

Monday - Thursday
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Important Dates Camp Tamarack

July 5-8 - Grandily Camp
July 9-12 - Primary Camp
July 9-15 - Middler Camp
July 14-16 - Reunion Camp

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IT'S TIME TO SHARE

So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up...
Galatians 6:9

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) supports disaster relief, ministries to displaced persons, and development projects of the American Baptist Churches and its partners. Visit <http://abc-oghs.org/> for more information or to donate.



SAVE THE DATE - ABC-WI 179th Annual Gathering

- When: Oct. 13-15
- Where: Green Lake Conference Center
- Focus: Next Generation Ministries
- Theme Verse: "God's dominion is from generation to generation." - Daniel 4:3
- Visit abcofwi.org/annual-gatherings/ for more info.

SAVE THE DATE - Brewers Night with ABC-WI

- When: Aug. 3
 - Game starts at 6:15 PM.
 - Tailgate before the game from 4:00-5:00 PM
- Where:
 - Game: American Family Field
 - Tailgate: Underwood Memorial Baptist Church, 1916 North Wauwatosa Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53213
- Cost:
 - Game tickets: \$25.00 each
 - Tailgate: Free!
- Sponsored by ABC-WI & hosted by Underwood Memorial Baptist Church and the Men's Fellowship of First Baptist Church - West Allis,
- Contact the Region Office for tickets, and see the Region website for more information.



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