



American Baptist Churches of the Rochester/Genesee Region
Winter Delegates Meeting
Sunday, February 2, 2025
Virtually via Zoom

Delegates from the member churches of the American Baptist Churches of the Rochester/Genesee Region met virtually on Sunday, February 2, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. EDT via Zoom.

1) Opening Worship – Planned by the Executive Board Connectional Life Team

Rev. Jason Alspaugh, President and member of the Connectional Life Team, introduced the opening hymn, a rendition of “We Are God’s People” recorded at East Penfield Baptist Church, Fairport, New York. Soe Win, member of the Connectional Life Team and Lake Avenue Baptist Church, Rochester, New York, read I Corinthians 12:4-11. A recording of “Cantemos al Señor” from University Baptist Church, Columbus, Ohio was shared. The closing hymn was “Bring Forth the Kingdom,” accompanied by a recording from Greece Baptist Church, Rochester, New York. Jason offered a word of blessing and prayer.

2) Call to Order and Roll Call of Churches

The meeting was called to order by President Jason Alspaugh. Anne Farrell, Clerk, announced that representatives of seventeen churches were in attendance; therefore, a quorum was established. Two additional churches whose applications for membership were on the agenda for consideration were also represented, bringing the total number of churches to nineteen. Fifty-one people attended, including voting delegates, Executive Board members, and guests.

3) Acceptance of Minutes

On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the October 13, 2024 Fall Delegates Meeting were accepted.

4) Election of Director

Jason advised that Orrin “Ted” Hardgrove announced his desire to step down from his position as a member of the Executive Board shortly after the delegates meeting in October. Rev. Denise Carrell has been temporarily serving on the Executive Board since that time and is being nominated to fill the vacant seat through the end of the current term that expires in 2026. Rev. Carrell is a member Christ Congregation Church, Princeton, New Jersey and was recently ordained having completed RGR’s ordination process. On a motion duly made and seconded, Rev. Denise Carrell was elected to fill Orrin “Ted” Hargrove’s unexpired term.

5) Applications for Membership

Jason reported that two churches have applied to join the American Baptist Churches of the Rochester Genesee Region. Representatives of both churches met with Executive Minister Sandy Hasenauer, as well as with a sub-committee of the Executive Board to discuss their desire to join the Region, as well as the membership application process.

The Executive Board subsequently reviewed the membership applications submitted by the Rochester Myanmar Christian Church and the First Baptist Church of Burlington, Vermont and is recommending their acceptance as member churches. Representatives of each church were present to address the delegates and respond to questions about their respective desires to join ABCRGR.

a) Rochester Myanmar Christian Church

Pastor Christopher Bwee, Assistant Pastor Ma Man, and Youth Pastor Khual Mung were present to represent the church. They shared a brief history of their worshipping community dating back to its formation in 2010. Because the members come from different ethnicities and religious backgrounds and worship styles, Burmese is the primary language used in worship. In addition to Sunday worship services, youth services are conducted in English on Saturday evenings. The church meets at Lake Avenue Baptist Church and continues to receive support from that congregation. Organizing documents have been constructed so that individuals can be members of both Rochester Myanmar Christian Church and Lake Avenue Baptist. Delegates were invited to ask questions or add comments. Representatives of the church were briefly excused to allow the delegates to discuss and vote on the application. Following a brief discussion, the delegates unanimously approved the Rochester Myanmar Christian Church's membership application, as recommended by the Executive Board. Representatives of the church returned to the meeting and were informed that their request to join was enthusiastically approved.

b) First Baptist Church of Burlington, Vermont

FBC Burlington was represented by the Rev. Karen Mendes and several congregants. Rev. Mendes explained that the church carefully explored the possibility of joining an ABCUSA Region more closely aligned with the congregation's understanding of God's call than that of the American Baptist Churches of Vermont and New Hampshire. The congregation concluded that ABCRGR would be a good fit. She also shared that a thriving Karen Baptist Community worships at and with FBC Burlington, noting that members of the Karen community in Burlington already have ties with the Karen community in Rochester. Discussion ensued regarding ways to overcome the language barrier to integrate the two communities more fully. Suggestions and resources were offered by attendees. Representatives of the church were briefly excused to allow the delegates to discuss and vote on the application. Following a brief discussion, the delegates unanimously approved First Baptist Church of Burlington, Vermont's membership application, as recommended by the Executive Board. Church representatives were readmitted to the meeting and informed that their request to join was enthusiastically approved.

6) Financial Report

Treasurer Beverly Murrell-Frasier reported that the Region's financial position is currently sound. The balance sheet reflects total assets of \$2.9 million primarily due to a sizeable gift from Good Shepherd Community of Faith and receipt of the Lily Endowment grant. Sandy added that the Finance and Investment Committee has directed her to invest Lilly grant funds in CDs with maturity dates timed so that funds will be available as needed. The investment could potentially yield \$30,000 in interest, the use of which would not be restricted by the Lilly Endowment. She further noted that New York State has granted Good Shepherd's request to dissolve, and Good Shepherd has directed that its gift to the Region may be used to offset operating deficits. On average, RGR operates at an annual deficit of approximately \$10,000. Sandy noted that the church's sizeable gift would cover annual deficits for several years if necessary.

7) President's State of the Region

Jason noted that the passage from I Corinthians 12 read earlier in the meeting says that to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. He posed the question, "How do we put all we've been given to work for the common good?" Jason shared that given the leadership team and the passion for the work of the Region, he feels confident what the Spirit has given to the Region and its churches is being used for the common good.

8) Executive Minister's State of the Region

Sandy shared that she finds working with the new officers a joy and expressed her appreciation for their support and leadership.

a) Lily Endowment Update

Sandy reported that the Region Administrator's hours have been increased, so Tarra Hartmann is now working 30 hours per week to oversee logistics. Towan Dicks has also been hired as a Project Coordinator. Both are being paid from grant funds. The first cohort of churches taking part in the Thriving Congregations project has been identified to include: Christ Congregation Church, Princeton, NJ; Immanuel Baptist Church, Rochester, NY; University Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN; St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church, Charlotte, NC; St. Luke Tabernacle Baptist Church, Rochester, NY; and York Baptist Church, York, NY. An in-person retreat with Ministry Architects consultants and coaches will take place in King of Prussia, PA this month. The deadline for applications to participate in Cohort 2 will be in March or April.

b) Cameron Community Ministries Update

Cameron Community Ministries is historically linked with ABCRGR and the Presbytery of the Genesee Valley. For the past year, Cameron has been dealing with financial challenges resulting from not receiving anticipated reimbursement from the City of Rochester for services rendered, as well as alleged mismanagement of funds by the former Executive Director. Sandy reported that Cameron is currently emerging from this difficult situation. She thanked all those who have supported the ministry over the past year. An annual report will be issued in the near future.

9) Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m. on a motion duly made and seconded. Jason offered a benediction, "Go in peace."

Respectfully submitted,

Anne E. Farrell

Anne E. Farrell
Clerk