



PARAGRAPHS FOR PARTNERS

2018 – Issue #4



From the Executive Minister
Rev. Dr. James Kelsey

Playing the Hand You're Dealt

God wanted Moses to go down to Egypt and speak to the Israelites about leaving. Then Moses and the elders were to go to Pharaoh and ask for permission to take a three-day trip into the wilderness to offer sacrifices. Moses balked, and God finally settled for a backup plan. Moses' brother Aaron would do the talking (Exodus 3 to 4). God played the hand he was dealt by his uncooperative servant Moses.

Later in the story of the nation, the people demanded a king from God. God did not want them to have a king and warned them about how a king would exploit them. The people persisted, and God finally gave them a king (1 Samuel 8). God again played the hand he was dealt by his untrusting people.

Sometimes God's backup plan can be a bit radical. John the Baptist warns: "Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire [Luke 3:8-9]." At some points God just moves on.

Let us be clear before we go any further. God does not have to play the hand God is dealt. God is able to accomplish whatever God wishes; that is part of being God. God *chooses* to adapt God's plans to human receptivity.

We, on the other hand, must often play the hand we are dealt; we are not God. We might want to give back the hand and draw another one; life rarely gives us that opportunity. Our employer closes, or we get ill. Our parents are not wealthy, and we attend a community college. Our spouse dies young, or a recession hits just as we are planning to retire. We would like life to deal us another hand; that rarely happens. As we say in upstate New York: it is what it is.

The Apostle Paul learned to play the hand he was dealt the best way he knew. He writes "Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me [Phil 4:11-13]." Paul learned how to be content with what life brought to him; he relied upon God to bring him through whatever life dealt him.

Churches must often play the hand they are dealt. They are carried upon currents over which they have no control. A factory closes and jobs are lost; people move away. Young people go off to college and do not return. Businesses begin staying open on Sunday, and church members must work. The culture shifts; and people lose interest in belonging to things, particularly communities that ask for a commitment. The standard of living rises and people get boats and cabins and can afford pricey soccer leagues; they spend their Sundays at leisure activities.

We might like to trade in this world for a different one. This is not an option. We do not get to choose our time and place in God's story. We must play the hand we are dealt the most faithful way we can. We must never forget, however, that it is still God's creation; and God is driving the narrative towards God's good conclusion. We simply find our place in our chapter of that story. God will have the last word, and with God the last word is always the best word.

In the meantime, we bring the best we have to offer to what we know of God, believing that God will bless in even unseen ways; that is faithfulness. We leave the final word to God; that is hope.

Blessings,
Jim

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS: John Partise (Pastor, FBC Ilion) married Beth Callahan on 10/20/18 * Christy Siau (ABCNYS Staff) and her husband David welcomed daughter Kailyn Mae – born 10/4/18



ABCNYS reminds member churches to pray for one another, especially in times of pastoral transition. If your congregation wishes to invite ABCNYS to provide support to your church's search committee needs, please contact Rev. Jerrod Huguenot, Associate Executive Minister, at 518/380-4510 or jhuguenot@abc-nys.org.

ABCNYS - STATE OF THE REGION

*Presented at the ABCNYS Biennial Meeting September 29, 2018
Bethany Baptist Church, Syracuse
Rev. Jim Kelsey, Executive Minister*



New York American Baptists continue to meet and worship together as congregations. They continue to gather to seek guidance and encouragement from studying scripture together. They faithfully pray for one another and the broader world. They care for their fellow church members and reach out to their communities and, through Regional and denomination missions, care for all of God's creation. By the way they live and care for others, they give witness to the saving, transforming, and unconditional love of God. The Kingdom of God is alive and authentic in upstate New York.

You may be saying: "Wait a minute, you are talking about congregations. What about the state of the Region?" Well, our churches *are* the Region. We are a family of churches; Regional ministry is always embedded in and responding to the life of our individual congregations. To talk about Regional ministry outside of this frame of reference is to talk without a context. So how has the Region been embedded in and responded to the lives of our churches?

MISSION EXPANSION

Since we last met in 2016, the Region has completed our cycle of 5 mission trips to work with the AMOS health ministry of ABC missionaries Drs. David and Laura Parajon in Nicaragua. A group of ABCNYS Baptists are continuing to work with this ministry, most recently building a self-contained mobile computer center outside Managua, a center powered by solar panels. This is the goal of our mission involvement: to introduce New York State Baptists to mission opportunities and then have them take them up as their own.

In 2018 the Region began a three-year partnership with two ministries in Rwanda. We are capitalizing on a long-term relationship two of our pastors have had with these ministries. In 2019 and beyond we will likely expand that partnership to work with the Siera group of churches.

The Region continues to introduce International Ministries missionaries to our churches and encourage mutually supportive relationships.

In 2018 we sponsored a four-day mission trip to Niagara Falls to serve with Community Missions of Niagara Frontier Inc. We served in variety of ways to some of the most vulnerable people in our State. The Board of Mission has taken on the aspirational goal of two trips to work with this ministry in 2019. They also have laid plans to provide a mission experience with a Native American population in New York State.

These expanding mission enterprises reveal a growing emphasis in our Region. We want to be “doers” of mission, opening ourselves up to the new and stretching experiences God has for us. If we are not challenging our congregations to dare new things for Christ, we as a Region are not being good stewards of the wealth God has invested in our people. In some organizations “mission creep” is seen as bad; with us it is seen as the pull of God’s Spirit.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

We have gotten nearly all our Lay Study courses online, both those sponsored by the Region and those sponsored by local Associations, In this way training is now available to everyone interested person in our Region. Some participants are honing their skills for lay leadership. Others are preparing to be a Certified Lay Pastor and lead a congregation. And some start out as the former and end up as the latter. (I love it when a plan comes together.) We are working creatively with church and leaders to match trustworthy, trained, called leaders to congregations who will respond well to their gifts.

We have provided and continue to train pastors in the special skills that make them well suited for interim ministry.

We have completed three of eight sessions of our *Going Deeper into Ministry through Continuing Study*, a program designed to equip pastors and other church leaders. It is funded by a Palmer Grant from the American Baptist Foundation.

An increasing number of our congregations are looking to multi-income stream pastors (I hate to say part time; no pastor gives just a part of themselves to ministry) to lead them. We are working to get people into ministry more quickly, sometimes with close mentoring.

We cannot change the realities of modern church ministry. Our churches need pastoral leadership. Our goal is to partner with them to help them make wise and informed choices, with maximum flexibility as to how that is achieved.

CHURCH LIFE

We must minister in the world we have, not the world we wish we had or maybe used to have. Our churches struggle with outsized expensive-to-maintain buildings. Region staff help them to set priorities and learn from the experiences of other congregations. Our churches struggle with changing demographics and find themselves in communities that are struggling. Sometimes churches must face questions of viability; this is never an easy conversation. Region staff guide them as they think through their options and help them gain wisdom from the experience of other churches. It is not an easy time to be a Christian congregation in upstate New York. Our congregations are working harder and trusting God more.

Our Burmese Diaspora churches, Karen, Chin, Kachin, and Zomi, are flourishing and bringing new vitality to our family. The Region walks with them as they negotiate organizing themselves, buying buildings, and adapting to a new culture.

Each year we sponsor the American Baptist Youth convention where young people are challenged to be committed disciples of Jesus Christ and are provided with tools to do that. These conventions are also a training ground for future church leadership, both lay and pastoral.

REGION FINANCES

We finished 2016 with a surplus of \$1,215.00. In 2017 we ended with a surplus of \$843.56. In 2018, as of the end of August, we have a deficit of \$3,236.00. We believe that the generosity of our churches will cover

this deficit by the end of the year. As you can see, in the most recent years, God through the faithfulness of our congregations has seen that Region ministry continues to have what it needs to do what God is calling us to do.

One item of concern is that we have a small number of churches that give an outsized portion of the Region's support. In 2017, we had 162 churches that contributed \$100 or more to the Region through the multiple avenues that churches support the Region: direct gifts, United Mission, ABCNYS Region Offering, America for Christ offering, and directed giving. We had 129 churches that contributed nothing to Region ministry. To provide ministry to 283 churches with support from only 54% of our congregations stretches Regional resources quite thinly.

The Board of Mission has made a commitment to set aside all one-time extraordinary gifts for our endowment. These would be gifts from estates, the dissolution of churches, etc. In this way, we are laying the groundwork so that when we are all gone, there will still be Regional ministry in New York State.

STAFF TRANSITIONS

Our ABY Convention Director, Jillene Narraway, is resigning at the end of 2018, having moved to West Virginia to take a job with a camp down there. We will miss her; in particular our young people and those who work with them will miss her leadership and wisdom. We wish Jillene all the best as she moves on to other ministries.

Christy Siau, our long time bookkeeper, webmaster, producer of brochures, and mission and youth enthusiast will be having her second child in October. In order to spend more time with her growing family, she has resigned her bookkeeping responsibilities. She will continue in her other capacities with the Region.

Sharon Argus has joined us as our new bookkeeper. She has a background in business and years of experience in accounting. She is currently the bookkeeper at one of our Syracuse area Baptist churches.

CONCLUSION

Our congregations continue to find ways to be faithful in a world they could not have seen 30 years ago. We, as a Regional family of congregations, move forward believing that God is in the change and meets us at every turn. The challenge always is to hear the prophet Isaiah: *I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (43:19).*



LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

Adriana Chaney from Tabernacle BC Utica 7/14/18

Debbie Kelsey from Adams Village BC to Pastor, Tabernacle BC Utica 10/14/18

David Ashby to Interim, United Ch Canandaigua 8/1/18

David Wood from Ft. Edward Village BC & FBC Glens Falls

Stephanie Schneider to Pastor, Ft. Edward Village BC & FBC Glens Falls 8/12/18

Cedric Broughton from FBC Rome to Retirement 8/31/18

James Walton from Kenmore BC

Robert Wiesner to Pastor, Kenmore BC 8/13/18

Steve Sanden from FBC Penn Yann 8/26/18

Bonnie Seitz to Interim, Meridian BC 9/1/18

David Fife to Pastor, Elmwood Ave BC 9/1/18

William Dalrymple from Comm BC Wappingers Falls to Retirement 9/1/18

JD Milton to Pastor, W Hoosick BC 8/5/18

Ron Silver to Interim, FBC Manchester 8/5/18

Kathy Brown to Interim, FBC Penn Yan 10/7/18

Lillian Cabral to Interim, FBC Central Square 11/4/18



Friends in Christ,

American Baptist Men New York State's vision is to empower leaders of the American Baptist Churches by providing training through our annual conference, assisting at our camps and reaching out through activities such as the Bigger Breakfast and Annual Prayer Breakfast. Without your support AB Men would not have the financial means to plan and carry out these events. Some men and boys could not attend the events without your support. Thus, the **Mission to Men**

Offering was born. Your gift to the **Mission to Men Offering** will advance the ministry of the American Baptist Men, enabling us to grow, develop new ministries and assist with training events.

Mission Statement:

The AB MEN program exists to cooperate with local churches to equip and encourage men in the state of New York to become influencers in their world for the cause of Christ.

We will accomplish this goal by providing:

1. Training for leaders to help develop the AB Men program locally
2. Annual conferences to motivate men to greater spiritual commitment
3. Opportunities for ministry and missions experiences domestically and internationally
4. Sectional breakout conferences throughout the year provide continued training for leadership
5. Opportunities to be involved in disaster relief work
6. Launching new ministries such as Faith Works! The mission of Faith Works (based on James 2:14-17) is to partner with churches and American Baptist affiliated organizations to assist in local projects as needs arise. If your men's group, church or Association is in need of assistance, send us an email so the AB Men board can evaluate the project and determine if we are able to help.

Please send your tax deductible gift to Robert Rozell 34 Perry Lane, Cambridge, NY 12816. Please make the check out to AB Men NYS and write 2018 mission to men on the memo line.

Your brother in Christ,

Leroy Woodruff
AB Men NYS President
yorel40@hotmail.com

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." Luke 12:48 (NIV)

FROM THE ABCNYS OFFICE

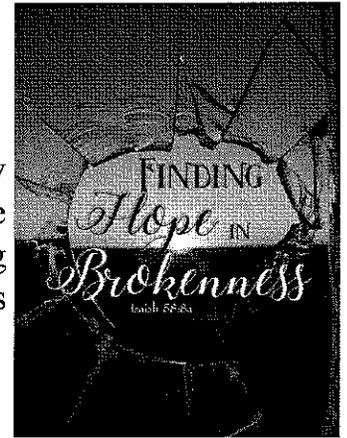
+ Left behind at the Biennial: hooded, gray sweatshirt ("Nike" on front). Contact the office (315.863.7148, mschwarz@abc-nys.org)

+ The Region office will be closed November 22&23, December 24&25, 2018 and January 1, 2019.

+ The Region office moved to a new location over a year ago. Some of you haven't changed the address. Mail will no longer be forwarded from the old address, so be sure to make the change: **3218 James St., Syracuse NY 13206**. Please and Thank you!

2018 ABCNYS BIENNIAL: FINDING HOPE TOGETHER!

The 2018 ABCNYS Biennial welcomed participants to the Bethany Baptist Church of Syracuse over the weekend of September 28-30,. We had a great big time of fellowship, learning together and experiencing the hospitality of our host church and Rev. Phillip M. Turner, Bethany's pastor, and First Lady Janice Turner.

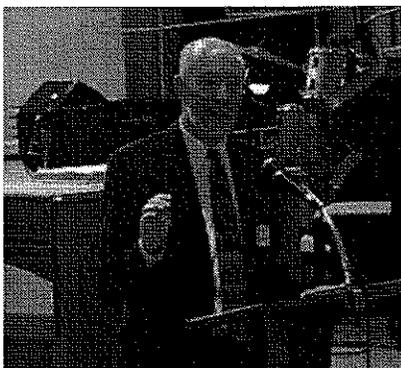


Dr. Zina Jacque, an American Baptist pastor from Chicago, proved why she is frequently in demand across our denomination as a preacher and presenter. Her inspiring sermons on Friday night and Saturday morning raised the spirits of all in attendance.

Workshops and seminars focused our Regional gathering around the theme of "Finding Hope in Brokenness" (Isaiah 58:8a). We engaged issues of racism, Rwanda's long journey toward reconciliation and our ongoing ABCNYS mission trips there, helping children navigate adverse experiences, and supporting global mission in Thailand with IM missionary Becky Mann. Rev Turner provided our Bible study on Saturday morning. Rev Tom Wiles of ABC/Rhode Island shared an engaging Saturday night presentation on improvisation, change and church leadership. Our Sunday morning with Bethany Baptist's 11 AM worship service uplifted an already uplifting weekend!



The Region's business meeting featured the "State Of the Region" report given by Dr. Jim Kelsey and remarks from the outgoing Board of Mission president Rev Dennis Christiansen. At the Region's business meeting, **Marilyn Malone** was elected as the new Board of Mission President for 2019-2020, **Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow** was elected VP, Rev Jim Harriff was re-elected as Treasurer, and **Rev. Pat Ludwig** was re-elected Secretary.



Our ABCNYS Biennial was made possible by your church's support of the 2018 Region Offering and gifts through United Mission Basics, and the America for Christ offering. To give online, visit www.abc-nys.org and donate with your credit/debit card via our PayPal portal.

INTERIM MINISTRY TRAINING TWO: MAY 6-8, 2019

INTERIM MINISTRY TRAINING

Sponsored by ABCNYS & ABCUSA Transition Ministries

UNIT II—Intentional Interim Ministry

Monday to Wednesday, May 6-8, 2019

Stella Niagara Conference Center, Lewiston, NY

In April 2017, ABCNYS presented Unit I of the Interim Ministry Training developed by the Center for Congregational Health. We are pleased to announce UNIT II “Intentional Interim Ministry”, taught once again by Dr. Larry Swain (Retired ABC Ohio Executive Minister) and supported by Dr. Patricia Hernandez, Executive Director of ABCUSA Transition Ministries.

This training is now being offered by ABCUSA as a result of the Center for Congregational Health’s completion of its work in interim training and the efforts of ABCNYS and ABCUSA partners to offer a lower-cost tuition rate. Persons who have completed Unit I at any previous time are welcome. Persons who have not taken Unit I previously are not eligible for this training.

Certification for the second unit will be issued by ABCUSA to all participants completing the advanced homework and the 2 ½ day training session exploring key ways you can help a congregation manage its transition time wisely and with a renewed sense of purpose.

COST: \$300 (inclusive of tuition, two nights lodging, double or single occupancy, shared baths, all meals/break time snacks, and training facilities)

\$230 (for persons who wish to “commute” from home and need no overnight lodging)

A non-refundable payment of \$100 by DECEMBER 15, 2018, will be needed to secure your seat at the training. The balance of \$200 will be due by APRIL 1, 2019. **All checks payable to ABCNYS, memo line: 2019 Interim Training. MAILING ADDRESS: ABCNYS, Attn: INTERIM, 3218 James St., Syracuse, NY 13206**

Questions? Contact Rev Jerrod Hugenot, jhugenot@abc-nys.org or 518/380-4510.

Scholarships available from these sources:

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (www.abhms.org, click “Education & Scholarships”)

ABCNYS Lynette Martin Fund (<http://www.abc-nys.org/lynette-martin-educational-fund.html>)

Heidi Lynn Fuller Ministry Fund, Inc. (www.hlfullerministryfund.org)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

I completed Unit I of the Interim Ministry training with _____ ABCNYS (April 2017)

OR

I completed Unit I of the Interim Ministry training with _____ Other time/location (Note where and when)



COMPASSION IN ACTION
SINCE 1925

OCT 15 2018

October 4, 2018

American Baptist Churches Of New York State
3218 James St
Syracuse, NY 13206-3056

Dear American Baptist Churches Of New York State,

Thank you for your generous gift of \$1,250.00 to Community Missions, Inc. on August 7, 2018. Your gift has already made an impact. In August alone, Community Missions provided 10,903 meals and 1,184 nights of shelter. This could not have happened without the support of our community, including volunteers and donors like you.

We would like to personally thank you for making our work possible. Your kindness and support makes possible our mission of serving the ever growing number of people of all ages who come to us in need.

Your generosity helps Niagara County neighbors provide for themselves and their families in our community. Our current and future success of providing assistance to those in need is increased by the continued generosity of our supportive donors.

I would welcome an opportunity to speak with you, at your convenience, to learn more about your support of Community Missions. Thank you again, and feel free to reach out at any time!

With deep gratitude,

J. Christian Hoffman
Director of Communication
choffman@communitymissions.org
716-285-3403 x.2247

FOR YOUR TAX PURPOSES

Your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. We acknowledge no goods or services were provided to you in return for your contribution. Please save this letter for your tax records as confirmation of your donation. Community Missions, Inc. (Tax ID: 16-0788242) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

*Dear Sisters & Brothers,
What a blessing you have been!
Your mission trip here this summer
was so helpful and now the
financial gift. Thank you!!
Your faith in, and contribution
to the ministry happen right here
is such a blessing.
Please
Pastor Mark Beane
Agency Mission*