

Report of the President

The year 2020 started off knowing that our Executive Minister, Rev. Dr. Tom Wiles, would be retiring in June. The Executive Committee of the Board of Ministries had the responsibility of finding an interim. We met with Dr. Jeff Woods of ABC-USA, who gave us helpful guidance about the search process. He recommended four excellent candidates, each of whom were interviewed via Zoom. I so appreciate the members of the Executive Committee with whom I worked: Vice President Beth Berry, Treasurer Bob Butzier, and Clerk Ann McGloshen. Together, we worked diligently and participated in many Zoom hours of first and second interviews and feedback with each other after each interview.

Up until mid-March, the Board of Ministries was meeting as usual, and our Annual Meeting was held at Lakewood Baptist Church. Pastor Ron Provencal and the congregation were excellent hosts.

We had hoped to have the All-Church Worship in June rather than the typical October date so we could celebrate with Tom Wiles the many years of his ministry as Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island. Sadly, the pandemic prevented us from having such a gathering.

By April, all Board of Ministries meetings, as well as most other meetings, were on Zoom or over the phone. I appreciate all of the volunteers who serve on the many ministry teams and committees. ABCORI is blessed to have so many people who care deeply about our region and even more so about helping each other and our churches be the light of Christ in this world.

In July we welcomed Rev. Douglas Harris as our Interim Executive Minister. He worked his first two months remotely from Chicago. He arrived in Rhode Island in September. As the spread of COVID-19 increased exponentially, it was discussed that traveling back and forth from Rhode Island to Illinois was not in the best interest of his health, especially as the virus began to spike. Doug has recently had his first vaccination shot and by this meeting may have had his second. When it is safe for him to do so, he will be coming back to RI.

Financially, 2020 was a challenging year. Many thanks to our Treasurer, Investment Committee, and staff, who have been faithful in managing our finances and discerning the best ways to cover expenses, which included applying for and receiving the Paycheck Protection Plan loan.

The Board of Ministries is now appointing members for the Executive Minister Search Committee. It is hoped that we will find an Executive Minister by July 2022. Please keep the Executive Minister search and our region in prayer. 2020 was difficult in many ways, yet it taught us that the work of the church does not stop even when we cannot meet together.

It has been an honor to have served as President of ABCORI these past two years.

In Christ,
Wendy Kiefer-O'Brien