

**The Living Waters Association Delegates Meeting
at the Elmwood Avenue Baptist Church
Elmira Heights, NY
September 17, 2023**

1. Introduction: The Living Waters Association (of the American Baptist Churches of New York State) had its Fall Delegates Meeting and the Elmwood Avenue Baptist Church in Elmira Heights, NY, on Sunday afternoon, September 17, 2023. The Rev. David Fife, the pastor of the host church and the Association Moderator, called the meeting to order, made a few opening remarks, and gave a few announcements. The meeting began at 3:02 PM. The Rev. Fife led an opening prayer.

2. Roll Call: The Rev. Jeremy Spencer, Secretary of the Association, led in a Roll Call of Churches. Eleven churches and twenty-nine persons were present at the meeting. The following table presents attendance figures in greater detail:

Nr.	Place	Church	Pastor/Leader	Number of Delegates	Number of Visitors
1	Addison	First Baptist Church	Scott Greene		
2	Bath	Bath Baptist Church	Dale Kee		
3	Big Flats	American Baptist Community Church	Michael Dickinson	3	
4	Canisteo	First Baptist Church	James Patton	1	
5	Coopers Plains	Coopers Plains Community Church	Robert Hayes		
6	Corning	First Baptist Church	Michael Dickinson	2*	
7	Elmira	Monumental Baptist Church	Corey Cameron Cooke, Sr.		
8	Elmira	United Baptist Church	Jim Horton, Interim Pastor	1	
9	Elmira Heights	Elmwood Avenue Baptist Church	David Fife	3	4
10	Enfield (Ithaca)	First Baptist Church of Enfield Center	Jean Owens		
11	Hornell	Hartsville Community Baptist			
12	Hornell	First Baptist Church			
13	Hornell	Howard Union Church			
14	Montour Falls	First Baptist Church	George Norton, Jr.	2	
15	Odessa	Odessa Baptist Church	Jeremy Spencer	3	4

16	Pine City	Pine City Baptist Church	Carol Patterson Interim Pastor	2	
17	Reading Center	Reading Community Church	David Daniels	1	
18	Savona	Savona Federated Church	Scott Mellott	1	
19	Trumansburg	Searsburg Community Church		1	
20	Trumansburg	First Baptist Church	Dennis Christiansen		
21	Watkins Glen	First Baptist Church	Jeff Miller		
22	Waverly	First Baptist Church	Steve Dygert		
23	Woodhull	Community Church of Woodhull	Brian Diffenbacher		
Visitors from outside the Association who were not counted above (Rev. Steve Reynolds).					1
Total Number of Delegates				20	
Total Number of Visitors					9
Grand Total of Delegates and Visitors				29	
Number of Association Churches Represented				11	
Percentage (%) of Association Churches Represented				47.8%	

Each church is allowed three official delegates. If a pastor serves more than one church within the Association, that person is only counted once. An asterisk (*) indicates where this is the case.

3. Worship and Devotional: The Rev. Fife led the delegates and visitors in a worship and devotional time, and it should be noted that the Rev. Fife had prepared a colorful fall bulletin for the meeting. He based his devotional remarks on Galatians 6:1-5 and said we are called to bear one another's burdens 1) in our families, 2) in our churches, 3) in our communities, and 4) in our times of sharing. There are practical ways to bear one another's burdens. We can "cast our cares on the Lord" (Psalm 55:22) and turn to Christ as our "coach."

After the Rev. Fife's remarks concluded, the delegates and visitors sang the hymn, "To God Be the Glory"

4. Presentation on "Worship and Transformation" by Dr. Loueda Bleiler: Dr. Loueda Bleiler of Odessa led a presentation on worship based on the results of a recent doctoral dissertation she had written and completed at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. In her opening remarks, she noted that transformation may seem like a bold claim, involving conversion, metamorphosis, and change. Yet, she asked, don't we want lasting change for our churches? The concept of transformation resonates because of Ephesians 4:22-24: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." This text speaks of being "made new in the attitude of [one's mind]" and of "putting on the new self." Worship is a form of "reality therapy" that aligns us with God's truth.

Moving into the heart of her presentation, Dr. Bleiler observed that both worship studies and educational journals speak of transformation—a parallel she found compelling. She wondered if

there was a way the church might benefit from research on transformative learning. Might there be a “double impact” on both education and worship? Jack Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning identifies “Ten Phases of Transformative Learning” that might be helpful for churches to consider. She reviewed these for the audience:

1) Often there is a “trigger” for transformation, possibly a “God-encounter” for Christians. The Apostle Paul had such an experience, as did Moses, Jacob, Mary, and others.

2). Such an experience leads to self-examination. Paul speaks of this in Romans 12:3: “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you” (NIV). The Spirit nudges self-reflection.

3). These experiences in education and in worship lead to assessing or reassessing one’s assumptions. We may find that we are alienated from social expectations. 1 Peter 2:11 speaks of Christians as aliens, strangers, and exiles. What assumptions do we hold about goodness, our finances, our independence, our habits, our relationships, and other matters?

4). People who are transformed often do so in fellowship with others: it isn’t a solo walk.

5). and 6). Churches do well to trust people before they’re considered to be fully trustworthy...so that people will grow into new skills.

7). and 8). Putting new learning/understanding to work is necessary for learning (or worship) to have a lasting impact. This is because we may change our mind or reorient our hearts without allowing the change to impact what we do.

9). Trying out new roles. It is important to assess what we’re doing. Is it working? Is this where the Spirit is leading one to be?

10). As we draw near to God, we become more like him. In 2 Cor. 3:18, the Apostle Paul writes of having “unveiled faces” and of “being transformed into [the Lord’s] image.”

This educational theory may enhance the efforts of the church in worship, and it is worth exploration and reflection, Dr. Bleiler said. Dr. Bleiler closed her remarks by leading the delegates and visitors in prayer. Dr. Bleiler’s presentation concluded at 3:54 PM.

5. Hymn “O Worship the King” This congregational hymn was the transition between Dr. Beiler’s presentation and our business meeting.

6. Business Meeting: The Living Waters Association Business Meeting began at 3:58 PM. The Rev. Fife led the meeting as Moderator.

a. Minutes: The Rev. Jeremy Spencer, Secretary of the Association, presented the *Minutes* of the Annual Meeting of the Association in February 26, 2023, verbally. Each Delegate had received a copy of the *Minutes* at the registration table. The *Minutes* will be available on the Association’s web site. There was a motion by Mrs. Juanita Dickinson, and seconded by the Rev. George Norton, Jr., to accept the *Minutes* as presented; the motion carried.

b. Treasurer’s Report: Mr. Paul Miller, the Association Treasurer, presented the Delegates a written Treasurer’s Report. His report showed receipts for period from Mar. 1, 2023, to Sept. 18, 2023, of \$3,898.00. Meanwhile, disbursements for the same period were \$1,738.20, for a net gain of \$2,159.80.

The Rev. David Daniels moved that the Treasurer’s Report be accepted; the Rev. Michael Dickinson seconded the motion, which carried.

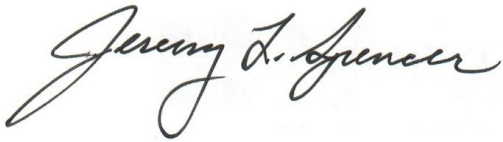
c. Old Business: There was no old business to come before the Association.

d. New Business: Mr. Miller announced that the Association Executive Committee had decided to change the name of the November Laity Appreciation Banquet to the Living Waters Association Annual Banquet. At the time of the meeting, the Executive Committee planned to have the Annual Banquet on November 10th at the New Beginnings United Methodist Church in Elmira. Mr. Miller said that delegates and Association churches would receive a letter from him about banquet plans in early October.

e. Adjournment: The Rev. Fife thanked people for coming to this meeting and concluded the meeting with prayer, which was also the prayer for the meal to follow. The meeting adjourned at 4:08 PM.

7. Meal: Our hosts at the Elmwood Avenue Baptist Church served the delegates and visitors a delicious meal of ham and potatoes in the church gymnasium.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeremy L. Spencer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Respectfully submitted,".

Rev. Jeremy L. Spencer
Secretary
Living Waters Baptist Association