



# The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

A Newsletter of the American Baptist Churches in the Rocky Mountain Region

## Gulf Mission Project 2006

The residents of cities and small towns along the Gulf Coast will never forget August 29, 2005. All across America, we watched as Hurricane Katrina destroyed entire communities. The images of people in shelters and on rooftops will be etched in our minds for years to come.

In the days and weeks that followed, many individuals and churches committed themselves to helping the residents of the Gulf Coast. American Baptists across the nation joined to provide immediate relief to those most in need. As Gulf Coast residents were relocated to Colorado, three Denver ABC churches were flooded with donations.

As the headlines fade, the hard work of rebuilding these communities is just beginning. ABCRM will be a part of the rebuilding process. ABCRM is sponsoring a student mission project to Gulfport, Mississippi, July 21-30, 2006. High school and college students from across ABCRM are invited to participate in rebuilding Gulfport. Churches are asked to send at least one adult sponsor with their students. These students will "Discover God Together" as they grow together as a



team and as they work side by side with the residents of Gulfport.

The Gulf Mission Project 2006 is being underwritten with funds from the Carl Bennet Youth Fund. The cost of the Gulf Mission Project will be \$700 per person. This includes the round-trip flight to New Orleans, meals, lodging, and supplies for the work projects. The actual cost of the Mission Project will be \$1000 per person, but the Carl Bennet Youth Fund will pay approximately \$300 per person.

Applications are available at all ABCRM churches as of January 15, 2006. Applications must be submitted by March 1 with a \$50 deposit.

*Mike Oldham  
Ministry and Mission  
Cluster Coach  
and Mission Project Coordinator*

### Inside Information

- Help the Homeless
- Gillette Church Reaches Out to Local Schools
- New Pastors Welcomed
- Missionary-in-Residence
- Tribal Theology (Part 1)
- Disciple to Disciple

## Computer Help Available to ABC Churches and Individuals

ABC/USA has created a site designed to provide American Baptist churches and individuals with information about computers and related issues (PC and Mac). This site contains resources on helpful tips, free and discounted software, virus and security information, computer/hardware recycling, and discounted computer purchases for ABC churches.

Please visit <http://pchelp.abc-usa.org/>.

## Some Musings on Tribal Theology in Northeast India

*(This article is the first in a series on this topic written by Ahaio Vashum, our global mission partnership specialist.)*

### Introduction

The phrase “tribal theology” has evoked interesting queries both from tribal and non-tribal Christians. What is tribal theology? Why tribal theology? As Christians why do we need another theology? Is tribal theology different from Christian theology? What is the purpose or goal of tribal theology? These are obviously relevant, serious questions which deserve earnest and close attention. In this series of articles, I will discuss the nature and purpose of tribal theology. My treatment of this potentially empowering theology will be limited by my own experiences and understanding of the tribes of North-east India.

Northeast India is located in the far eastern corner of India bordering Myanmar in the east, China and Bhutan in the north, and Bangladesh in the south. Northeast India consists of seven states, often known as seven sister states which are home to large indigenous/tribal communities, comprised of many tribes and ethnic groups with their own languages, ways of life, and histories. As it has been rightly described, Northeast India is a nation within a nation in which more than 100 ethnically diverse groups live.

In relation to India, the Northeast States are connected with the rest of the country by a narrow strip of land that is often called the “chicken neck” because it is long and narrow. This narrow strip of land has come to symbolize the profound isolation, neglect, and exploitation the people of this region suffer at the hands of India. The

*(continued on page 3)*

### *One congregation, one family*

## Metro Denver Cluster Churches Encouraged to Help the Homeless

On Tuesday, January 10, Desmond Hoffmeister, Transitional Executive Minister, was among the 450 religious and community leaders of Metro Denver who met with Mayor John Hickenlooper to learn more about the mayor’s faith-based initiative to end homelessness in ten years. The initiative calls for the formation of mentoring teams from within the faith community.

Mentoring is about long-term results and solutions and can help break the cycle of homelessness. Studies have shown that mentoring programs for homeless families help them stay off the streets. A family that is not mentored has, on average, only a 30% chance of remaining off the streets in six months. On the other hand, a family in a mentoring relationship has an 80% chance of remaining off the streets one year later. The goal of “One Congregation, One Family” is to partner homeless families and seniors with mentors for up to six months.

A 2005 survey showed that 4% of Denver’s homeless are seniors and 43% are women and children. Under the mayor’s initiative, teams of two to six people will mentor a family or a senior. Mentors will provide financial advice, material and spiritual support, and give guidance as needed. In addition, the sponsoring group is asked to provide \$1200 for rental assistance and other needs. While every attempt will be made to match congregations with participants who request mentors from a specific religious faith, mentoring congregations are prohibited from attempting to convert mentees. While the mentoring component is critical to the success of this program, financial contributions are accepted.

A broad-based leadership team from Denver’s faith community is guiding the initiative, and the Denver Rescue Mission is coordinating the mentoring program as well as training and supporting the mentoring teams. The City of Denver and the Rescue Mission each are contributing \$120,000 to finance the initiative. The City’s share of the funding comes from federal funds designated for use in ending homelessness.

### Meet the Challenge!

I join with Mayor Hickenlooper in encouraging Metro Denver Ministry and Mission Cluster churches to help meet this challenge to end homelessness. American Baptists have a long history of charitable support for the less fortunate. Last fall, we saw the overwhelming response that resulted from our call for help as we anticipated the arrival of Katrina evacuees in Denver. Once again we have the opportunity to help people who are in need.

Perhaps you’re wondering how much time is expected of mentors. A mentoring team will be asked to participate in a 90-minute training session and then meet seven times over four to six months with the family or senior to guide them toward self sufficiency.

Congregations interested in participating may contact the Rescue Mission at 303-313-2440. When you sign on, please let us know at the ABCRM office. We’d like to follow-up with you and help you share your story with the Region family. If you have additional questions, visit the official website: [www.fshi.org](http://www.fshi.org).

*Desmond Hoffmeister, ABCRM Transitional Executive Minister*

## First Baptist of Gillette Reaches Out to Local Schools

A number of years ago the Gillette Ministerial Association divided up the city schools among the churches, and took them as prayer concerns for our prayer lists. Several of the churches, First Baptist included, decided we would go a bit further and see what kind of needs the schools had that we might address.

The families whose children attend Lakeview School, our adopted school, have a lower average income than those attending most of the other schools. The principal said it would be nice if we could provide a few sets of underwear and sweat pants for children who have accidents or fall in a mud puddle, etc.

Over the years we have significantly increased what we do. We provide coats, clothing of various types, and have a special mitten/glove and hat tree at Christmas. We also provide treats for the staff from time to time throughout the school year.

The school lets us know when they are out of the sweats and underwear. This year the response was so tremendous that we adopted another school. Rawhide School had lost its supporting church due to the church's closing. We were able to supply coats, gloves, mittens, sweats and underwear, and the always appreciated treats for the staff at Rawhide as well.

What a joy it is for me as pastor and who ever goes along to deliver these things. The Lakeview staff is always amazed at the generosity of our congregation. The Rawhide School staff seemed just as pleased. It is one community ministry that is making a difference, and we get to enjoy the results.

*Mark Jervis, Pastor, FBC/Gillette, WY*

## Church Women United of Colorado to Hold Annual Meeting



Church Women United of Colorado will hold its annual meeting on Saturday, February 4, 2006 at First Christian Church, 16 E. Platte in Colorado Springs, CO. During this meeting, the CWU of Colorado will observe the organization's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday as well as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fellowship of the Least Coin. Local units are invited to bring scrapbooks or displays of their activities.

The selected theme for the event is "Living into Our History." The featured speaker will be the national president of Church Women United, Gail Mengel.

The combined registration and luncheon fee is \$15. The registration deadline is January 23. Child care will be available upon request. Contact CO/CWU president Judy Dunlavy at 303-423-2731.

## Tribal Theology . . .

*(continued from page 2)*

alienation, exploitation, and neglect resulting from decades of underdevelopment have produced far-reaching consequences in the lives of the people. The lack of substantial development projects on one hand in combination with the processes of globalization on the other have created precarious and even deadly situations for the majority of these people.

Ethnologically, the tribes in Northeast India belong to the Tibetan-Burman speaking group. In general the tribes can be categorized as comprising two broad divisions: the hills tribes and the plains tribes. The hills tribes consist of various groups of the Mizo-Kuki-Chin family, Nagas, Khasis, Garos and Arunachalis and reside in the states of Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh respectively. Most of the hills tribes have been heavily Christianized with the exception of the Arunachalis who have been isolated and protected from the influence of Christian missionaries by the Indian government. Prior to their conversion to Christianity, the hills tribes practiced what might be called a primal religion, which is very often incorrectly classified as animism.

In contrast, the plains tribes are concentrated primarily in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys of Assam, Manipur Valley and plains in Tripura. Most of these tribes have been Hinduized and assimilated into Hindu culture, but some have been more strongly influenced by Islam.

There is yet another tribal group known as the *adivasis* who were either brought to the region by the British, or they migrated to the Northeast to work as laborers on tea plantations. Having come from Orissa, Bihar, or Andhra Pradesh especially, most of them either belong to the Munda speaking family or the Dravidian speaking family.

*(To be continued in future issues.)*

## American Baptists Touched by Mining Disaster

American Baptists across the country are encouraged to continue praying for the mining disaster victims' families and American Baptist churches helping the communities deal with the tragedy.

Sago Baptist Church, an American Baptist church in the West Virginia Baptist Convention, ministered to families as a gathering place while they awaited word of loved ones' fate.

The AB Area Minister, Maxwell Hill, described the situation as one where the entire community feels the grief. He mentioned that Martin (Junior) Toler, a deacon at Stump Chapel in Sutton, W. Va., who died in the mine, was especially active in West Virginia Baptist Convention life. The Convention's Executive Minister, David Carrico, said, "Good, supportive churches are close to the situation and the Region is ready to support them as much as possible."

By way of denominational support, American Baptist Churches USA General Secretary, Roy Medley, said, "We appreciate the ministry of Sago Baptist Church and Pastor Wease Day at a time of great difficulty, and we hold up in prayer the church and this servant of God as they shepherd a community deeply stricken with grief. We grieve, as well, for the families who lost relatives in this disaster, and we pray for the recovery of the young man who survived. Christ would have us include in our prayers, too,

*(continued at right)*

## Solomon Temple Missionary Baptist Church Installs New Pastor

On November 13, 2005 John Tellis was selected by a majority vote to become the pastor of Solomon Temple Missionary Baptist Church in Denver. He was installed on Sunday, December 11, 2005. Willie Simmons, president of the National Baptist Western States Convention and pastor of Central Baptist Church in Denver delivered the message. Kay Farley, Metro Denver Ministry and Mission Coach, participated by reading Scripture. Desmond Hoffmeister, Transitional Executive Minister, gave greetings.

John Tellis was born in Louisiana. He and evangelist Mary Rhodes-Tellis have been married for 29 years. They have three children, John III, DeNesha, and Allan. They are also grateful grandparents of Imani.

Rev. Tellis accepted his call to ministry under the leadership of Pastor W. E. Simmons, Central Baptist Church, Denver, CO. He has been preaching for more than a decade. He has served as an official in the church since 1990—first as a teacher then as associate minister. He has partnered with a number of churches and schools to provide education and outreach services. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for Hope House and is a certified marriage educator. John has worked as a telecommunications executive for more than 25 years.

He is the founder of Tellis Ministries, Inc. (TMI). TMI taps into the needs of hurting and wounded people by planting hope in their lives. TMI also focuses on strengthening families and offering preventative methods to help deal with issues that might arise.

John Tellis believes that the ultimate purpose for Kingdom building is to stay committed and focused on the Great Commandment and the Great Commission and subsequently a Great Kingdom will continue to be birthed. The congregation and the Region family welcome him to ABCRM.

### **Mine Disaster. . .**

*(continued from previous column)*

the rescue team and the company that owns Sago Mine, for no one touched by this disaster is without pain and struggle. May God's hand bring comfort to all."

With regard to material support, National Ministries' Executive Director, Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, said National Ministries' Office of Disaster Relief stands ready to provide assistance, when needs are identified, with funds contributed by American Baptists through *One Great Hour of Sharing*. "At times such as these, our actions are the embodiment of God's love reaching out to those in despair. We pray and care for our brothers and sisters in Christ to prove that God, indeed, does not forsake us, even in the darkest night."

*Courtesy of the American Baptist News Service*

## FBC of Laramie Welcomes Mary Beth Mankin as Pastor



On Sunday, December 4, Mary Beth Mankin of Boulder, CO, preached a candidating sermon at First Baptist Church, Laramie, Wyoming. Following the morning service, a special business meeting was held, and a unanimous call was extended to Mary Beth. She accepted immediately, and began her first pastorate on January 1, 2006, with a New Year's communion service.

Mary Beth grew up in New York State and attended Keuka College where she received a B.A. in Biology and Secondary Education. She then attended the University of Massachusetts, at Amherst and received an M.A. in Botany. Upon her marriage to Bill Mankin, she came to Colorado where she became a member of First Baptist Church of Boulder.

In Boulder, she and Bill raised two children: David and Emily. Mary Beth was an active church member from 1972 to the present. She was a Sunday School teacher for junior highs and adults. She served on Group Life, Nurture, Evangelism, Church Growth Committees at the church. She served in many capacities in ABW Ministries, including president of the Colorado AB Women's Ministries.

After their children were raised, Mary Beth felt the call to go into professional pastoral ministry. With support from her husband, Bill, she made the decision to attend Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City. She received the Masters of Divinity Degree in May 2005.

Mary Beth was licensed by FBC, Boulder, in May 2003, and now looks forward to her ordination in her home church on January 15, 2005.

Her husband, Bill, is a Senior Scientist Emeritus from the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Bill is president of the Board of Central Baptist Seminary. Their son, David, is a computer software engineer at J2 Global Communications. Their daughter, Emily, is a graduate student at CU, majoring in mathematics.

Mary Beth's response to Laramie's call: "What attracts me to this ministry opportunity is that I sense here a committed core of Christians who are serious about being the church God would want them to be. Their expectations and hopes match my own. I view preaching, interpreting the faith, and spiritual life development as basic to rooting the church in faith."

First Baptist Laramie welcomes Mary Beth Mankin with high hopes. We are grateful for the wonderful guidance our search committee received from the Region office, and are especially thankful that Mary Beth accepted our call!

*Mary M. Burman, Chair of the Search Committee*

## Prayer Of Confession in Observance of Martin Luther King Day

*Most holy and merciful God: we acknowledge and confess our slowness to do good, our blindness to injustice, and our complicity in deferring the dreams and hopes of the oppressed. We have refused to heed your call to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you, our God.*

*We condemn racial injustice in our pronouncements, yet we cling to the privileges derived from inequity. When we ought to be ashamed of our failures, we prefer to cling to private, selfish, imprisoning desires. We participate in our own oppression.*

*Help us to name our sin, to claim responsibility for our actions, and to change our behavior. In accordance with the commands of Jesus Christ our Savior, shake us from our sleep with your imperative to do justice; move us to action with the compassion of your grace; and give us courage to pay the price, however painful or costly, that the justice you will, may be done, on earth as in heaven. Amen.*



## Sarah Chetti to be Missionary-in-Residence at Calvary Baptist Church and Metro Denver Cluster



American Baptist missionary, Sarah Chetti, will be missionary-in-residence at Calvary Baptist Church in Denver, CO the week of February 11-17th. She will also be available to other local congregations.

Daniel and Sarah Chetti are the first International Ministries missionaries in Lebanon. They serve at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary.

Sarah Chetti helps in the development and organization of the seminary's library. As a major theological library for the entire region, the acquisition of books plays a significant role in the training of students who come from various parts of the Middle East to study at the seminary.

In the past few years, Sarah's ministry has expanded beyond the walls of the seminary. "Even though I am a full-time librarian, I always had a deep yearning to be involved in other ministries as well," says Sarah. Recently Sarah and friends began organizing youth programs for teenage kids in their neighborhood.

*(continued on page 7)*

## Wyoming Association of Churches Board Develops Social Justice Goals

The board of the Wyoming Association of Churches met for two days in Thermopolis, WY in December 2005 to refine its social justice agenda as proposed by the Social Justice Committee.

Following is the action plan that came out of the December board meeting:

### Domestic Violence

- Work with the faith-based community to address issues of domestic violence.
- Apply for a "faith based" Justice Department grant to assist in this endeavor.
- Provide training workshops for churches in collaboration with existing domestic violence programs.

### Environmental Justice

- Continue to address issues of environmental justice.
- Work to save the Red Desert and provide resources for churches pursuing environmental advocacy.
- Sponsor a retreat for religious and environmental people which would offer a relaxed opportunity to get to know one another better.

### Peace

- Plan an annual symposium to address roots of violence and roots of peace.
- Address a peace alternative and mindset for Wyoming.

### Education

- Develop an education plan and make the organization better known.
- Obtain media time to share what churches are doing.

### Communication

- Sponsor a "ministry fair" as an opportunity to bring together representatives of successful and innovative church ministries throughout the state.

## WAC Legislative Involvement

The Wyoming Association of Churches also plans to expand its presence at this year's budget session of the legislature in Cheyenne. The session begins on February 13<sup>th</sup> and the WAC board meeting will take place on February 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>. A special Legislative Prayer Service is being planned for 12:00 noon on February 13<sup>th</sup> in the Capitol Rotunda. It will be led by WAC board members. Several legislators will participate as well.

A group of supporters in Cheyenne have offered to monitor specific pieces of legislation as the session progresses. Some of these folks have offered to speak at committee hearings. Warren Murphy, WAC Director, will be make several presentations during the session. While WAC is not one of the "big time" lobbyists in Cheyenne, its intention is to keep alive the "moral imperative" in the midst of this secular world.

## Lombard Mennonite Peace Center to Present Workshop

The scenario is all too familiar: the pastor of a congregation has resigned under pressure from unhappy members of the church. Left in the wake of the resignation are tensions between those members of the congregation who supported the pastor and those who were unhappy with the pastor and wanted to see the pastor leave.

What can be done to prevent this kind of situation from developing in your church? How can a church better support the pastoral leadership of the congregation? How can pastors and lay leaders better manage themselves in times of crisis and anxiety within a congregation?

Drawing on the experience of working with congregations who are in the midst of debilitating conflicts, the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (LMPC) has created the *Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations* workshop to address these kinds of questions. The workshop, to be led by LMPC Associate Director, Bob Williamson, will be presented at Christ Church, UMC in Denver, Colorado, on April 28-29, 2006, beginning Friday evening and continuing through Saturday afternoon.

The *Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations* workshop suggests ways for churches to work through pastoral transitions, to support and evaluate pastors effectively and fairly, and to establish more healthy conflict norms. It also gleans insights from family systems theory to suggest ways that leaders can function effectively in times of heightened anxiety.

### Registration Information . . .

The cost of the workshop is \$89.00 for those who register before the pre-registration deadline of April 14, 2006. The cost is \$109.00 after that date. Group discounts are available.

For more information and for registration brochures for the workshop, write LMPC at 101 W. 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Suite 206, Lombard, IL 60148; call 630-627-0507; or send to [Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org](mailto:Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org). Also be sure to visit the organization's website for other offerings: [www.LMPeaceCenter.org](http://www.LMPeaceCenter.org).

The workshop is highly interactive using case studies, workbooks, and group discussions to help participants learn how to prevent destructive conflict and encourage congregational health. Open to people from all denominations, congregations are encouraged to send teams comprised of pastors and lay leaders to attend the workshop together in order to derive the greatest benefit.

LMPC is committed to the mission of helping the church grow into health and wholeness, into all that Christ wants the church to be. LMPC pursues that mission by conducting numerous workshops on biblical peacemaking and conflict transformation, by offering mediation skills training for church leaders, and by providing mediation and consultation services for conflicted churches.

Sarah Chetti . . .

(continued from page 6)

Of particular significance within the Lebanese context is Sarah's prison ministry. It opens the door for Sarah to minister to a population which is disenfranchised and completely helpless. In addition to bringing women prisoners food and basic supplies, Sarah and her friends also share the love of Christ with them through Bible study and songs. The prisoners are women brought from different parts of the world, particularly Asia, as maids and who are then abandoned by their employers. Their financial resources and necessary documents having been confiscated by their employers, these women end up in prison for years, unable to return to their home lands. The Good News of the Bible is a life-line to the women and it plants hope in them.

### Invite Sarah Chetti to your church!

*During her week of  
residency at Calvary,  
Sarah will be be  
available to visit  
other local churches  
as time permits.*

*Please contact  
Anne Dondapati  
at 720-988-6475 with  
questions about  
Sarah's availability.*



## Disciple to Disciple

You may have been among the thousands of American Baptists who responded to questions about the values and practices, hopes and dreams for our denomination in 2004. The project was entitled, "Seek It: Finding God's Way for a New Day." That interview data resulted in a new mission statement for all American Baptists. One of the priorities identified in that mission statement is to become "radical disciples for Jesus Christ."

You are now invited to become a radical disciple by reflecting upon a daily devotional written by another American Baptist focusing on discipleship. The devotionals are made available through the homepage of the ABC-USA website each week ([www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)). If you have difficulty accessing the devotionals through the ABC-USA homepage, you may go directly to Disciple to Disciple by using this link: <http://www.abc-usa.org/devotional.htm> Each week will focus on a different theme that surfaced during one of the "Seek It" interviews. Staff from American Baptist Regions, national boards, agencies, and institutions have agreed to develop the weekly themes by writing daily devotionals to coincide with those themes. Thus, this is a project written by American Baptists for American Baptists focusing on themes deemed to be important to American Baptists.

We hope that you will enjoy and take advantage of this opportunity to become a radical disciple for Jesus Christ.

### ***The Rocky Mountain American Baptist***

is published by the  
American Baptist Churches  
of the Rocky Mountains

**Desmond Hoffmeister:**  
Transitional Executive Minister

**Ingrid Dvirnak:**  
Newsletter Editor

*Publication dates are the  
15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> of each month.*

*Deadlines for submissions are  
the 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of each month.*

