



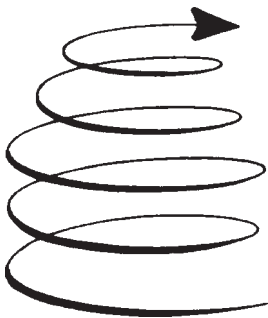
The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

Transforming Churches for Mission and Ministry Our Region's Focus for 2006

The gift of another year has been unwrapped, and we're putting it to good use. For all of us in the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountain, this year holds many opportunities for *Discovering God Together*.

At the end of last year the new coaches and I conducted "listening sessions" in the newly formed clusters. We observed and heard needs that will form the focus for our work together this year.



The areas of focus are:

• Spirituality and Worship

How do we intentionally nurture a culture of authentic worship?

How do we turn our churches into places where spiritual people can connect with God?

• Baptist Identity

How do we embrace those elements of Christendom that are unique to Baptists?

How do we relate to each other as Baptists in a post-modern world?

• Conflict Transformation

How do we acknowledge the polarity of our human existence without being threatened by it?

How do we use our potential differences that result in conflict for opportunities of growth and discovery?

• Leadership Development

How do we nurture the art and skill of holistic spiritual leadership?

How can we encourage leaders to seek and take advantage of the opportunities God has given us?

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- Northern Front Range Cluster Holds First Meeting

2006 GATHERING

hosted by New Hope Baptist Church, Denver
October 20-21

Theme:
Got Water?
John 4:13-14



**COME
AND BE REFRESHED!**

Our Region's Focus for 2006. . .
(continued from page 1)

Network with Us!

We intend to form four networks around these foci. The staff members who will be supporting these groups have written articles in this issue of RMAB to begin conversations on these topics. We are recruiting resource persons to provide additional expertise in these areas. Board members will self-select according to their particular interests. Wider networks will be developed and will meet during the 2006 Gathering in the fall. I invite you to join one of these networks if you have the passion or expertise. Let us know of your interest by contacting the appropriate staff person. (See related articles and e-mail addresses in this issue.)

Youth Ministry is a Priority

Youth Ministry remains a priority in our Region. Our two main youth events this year are a joint camping program and a mission trip to the

Gulf. In addition, we will develop and nurture a network of youth leadership.

We Need Your Input

Two processes in which we need the input from our churches are the drafting of the **New Bylaws** as well as wrestling with the Region's view on **Human Sexuality**. Jackie Arnold will lead the bylaw process and Mike Saylor the process on human sexuality. These are important issues; we encourage maximum participation by our constituents.

Audit Update

The auditors have given us a clean bill of health for our 2004 finances. We have appointed a **Finance Committee** of Bill Mankin, Debra Clark and Rhonda Magee who, together with Bob Blake, our treasurer, will provide financial oversight under a revised financial policy. We are hopeful that the 2005 audit will be ready by this summer.

Come Together

We have accepted the invitation from New Hope Baptist Church to host the 2006 Gathering. Larry Van Spriell and the program committee have been doing an excellent job in putting together an exciting program. Please plan to attend.

We are also planning a new conference this year. At this stage the working title is **Innovators Retreat**. It will be held May 11 and 12 at the Marriott in the Denver Tech Center. This is a retreat to help us train our minds and spirits to think in innovative and entrepreneurial ways.

Everything we do is for the purpose of transforming churches for ministry and mission. While we know that there are no magic answers, there are avenues along which we should travel as we strive to answer God's call. We believe we have been wise in our choices for the current year. We invite you to invest your energies alongside us as we move forward in ministry and mission.

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What's Quaker Ridge Like?

The staff of Quaker Ridge Camp has invited us to visit their facilities. This tour will be Saturday, March 25 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. It will be a "come and go" event. We are planning a time of prayer for our Region's camping ministry at 11:00 a.m. and we encourage your participation.

Quaker Ridge will provide lunch for those who RSVP or you may bring your own sack lunch. This tour is open to adults and children who are interested in attending camp at Quaker Ridge this summer. We will try to answer as many questions about camping as we can at that time.

Camping information has been mailed to churches and is available on the Region's website at <http://www.abcrm.org/ministries/camping.htm>.

Please RSVP to Mike Oldham at moldham@abcrm.org.

Worship is. . .



(Before you read any further, take a moment to complete the sentence: “Worship is. . .”)

Worship is getting a lot of attention these days. “Worship Wars” are waged in many of our churches. While we may think we are the “winners” or the “losers” in these skirmishes, it’s actually God who loses when we can’t agree about ways to worship, because. . .

Worship is up to the worshipers. It doesn’t matter what kind of music we sing. It doesn’t matter whether we use the big screen or hymnals. It doesn’t matter if we have a praise team or a choir. It’s not up to the minister or the worship leader or the musicians. When we expect them to do what only can be accomplished by us in our relationship to God, we are being unreasonable. In other words. . .

Worship is what goes on between us and God. It’s a dialogue in which we personally participate. Worship can’t be done *to* us or *for* us.

Rather, worship is done *by* us. Robert Webber says, “We must break with the intellectual tradition of worship which turns worship into a cerebral exercise and be open to the experience of the risen Christ in our midst who rises within us and changes our life.”¹ And it’s not just a Sunday experience!

Worship is a way of life. If it’s not, it’s nothing at all. We can’t switch on our worship when we enter the sanctuary on Sunday morning, and switch it off again when we go out the door. The greatest challenge for worshipers is what we do outside the service of worship. W.A. Tozer said that if you can’t worship God in the midst of your responsibilities on a Monday, it is unlikely that you were worshipping at all on Sunday.² Ultimately. . .

Worship is submission to God. In Helen Barrett Montgomery’s translation of the New Testament, Romans 12:1 reads, “*I entreat you therefore brothers [and sisters] by the mercies of God to present your bodies to Him as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This is your reasonable service of worship.*”³ As we give ourselves to God, even our work and leisure activities become acts of worship.

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Worship is the connection of faith and life. The gift of faith is not one of life’s add-ons. Rather, it permeates, unifies, and pulls together all of our experience. Therefore, worshipping God is not only a Sunday activity, but also a Monday challenge.

Have you accepted the challenge and the responsibility? It may mean that we need to reframe worship as we experience it. Worship is not a sentimental feeling or a flush of emotion. It’s not a spectator sport. It’s not something we produce for the purpose of attracting seekers. Neither is it evangelism or Christian education. **Worship is** about God and our response.

¹Notes from “Renew Your Worship” Workshop, Des Moines, IA, June, 1999.

²Quoted by Graham Kendrick in “Worship: The Big Picture,” *Worship Times* (Volume II, Number 3), 9.

³*The New Testament in Modern English* translated by Helen Barrett Montgomery was published by Judson Press in its 17th printing in 1968.

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To read more thoughts on worship by the same author, visit the ABC/USA website and read the daily devotional thoughts for the week of February 26.

Here's the link to the Disciple to Disciple page:
<http://www.abc-usa.org/devotional.htm>

Our Baptist DNA

“Baptists came from the womb of the seventeenth century English Reformation and landed immediately in hostile territory.”¹ It seems that we came into existence as a battling bunch. Shurden continues to say that Baptists bled in their earliest years and remained handcuffed throughout much of the eighteenth century. We bled from the whip of religious oppression and were confined by both church and state acting in tandem.²

So Baptist identity is firmly grounded in freedom—freedom for individuals and for church communities. While we have willingly combined our resources to form denominations, historically, there has been no hierarchy to dictate what we must believe or how we will carry out our ministries. Our focus on freedom has resulted in diverse theologies and ministries. But we remain committed to freedom.

In our freedom, we reject creeds. We also reject connectionalism, hierarchy, and theocracy because they violate the biblical manifesto found in Galatians 5:1: “*For freedom Christ has set us free.*” But the absence of a creed and hierarchy does not connote a lack of coherent content to our beliefs. We have identifiable Baptist principles:

- The living Christ is the final judge of our belief and actions. Therefore, we reject attempts to impose anything that would serve as a litmus test for orthodoxy.
- The Bible is a living document that needs to be interpreted for every age. No single individual or



group can faithfully interpret the Bible for every age or other group. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the community of faith reads and interprets the Bible. We nurture dialogue and encourage kindness when we discover differences among us.

- Separation of church and state benefits both the church and state. The church doesn't need the state to help it along, nor is it proper for the church to dictate policy to the state. Nevertheless, at the same time, we affirm our responsibility as citizens to make our opinions known.
- Soul liberty lies at the heart of Baptist thinking. We reject the efforts of some to force all Baptists into a single position on controversial issues. We value diverse theological, political, and social positions.
- The hallmark of the Baptist movement is the local church, which is free to seek out and act on what the spiritual community determines is the way to follow Christ. We affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord of both the individual and the church. Both are free to follow where God

leads without permission or approval from an ecclesiastical structure. Hence, the autonomy of the local church is familiar language to us.

- We practice the associational principle. While a Baptist church doesn't need permission from the denomination to enter into any mission or ministry, in our Region, churches cooperate with others in their cluster to do things that they cannot accomplish alone.
- The priesthood of all believers is another foundational principle for us. Each of us stands directly before God. As individuals, we determine how to relate to God. We each receive the blessings of grace and salvation directly from God to whom we are accountable. In turn, we bring God's love to the world through our ministries in the world.

These principles are part of our DNA as Baptists. With freedom at the center, theological conformity has never been a goal. In our environment of freedom, we continue to claim free inquiry into biblical, social, political, and economic issues of importance as an important gift from our rich heritage.

¹Walter B. Shurden, “How We Got That Way: Baptists on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State” (Washington, DC: Baptist Joint Committee, 1997), 3.

²*Ibid.*, 4.

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Conflict Transformation

Conflict is often the dirty secret that we try to pretend is not present in our churches. We either try to hide it from visitors and new members, or we try to recruit them for “our side.” We know how we should interact as brothers and sisters in Christ. We also are aware that the ugly reality in many churches is that we do not practice biblical principles in dealing with conflict. In fact, if we are honest, many of our churches more closely resemble the conflicted church at Corinth than the unified church at Philippi.

Though many pastors and lay leaders avoid conflict, the reality of conflict is that avoidance is the most destructive path. We “handle” it by not handling it. We think it will go away or will solve itself. Avoidance takes two forms: (1) it is not discussed, or it is discussed only superficially; (2) one faction in the church moves from the conflict situation. Unresolved conflict often grows to proportions far greater than anyone ever anticipates.

Churches not only avoid conflict, they avoid needed change. In many churches, the people who are the loudest or who have the most dominant personality remain in power, even if this is destructive to the church. A false understanding of what it means to be “Christ-like” keeps us from addressing the conflict and power struggles in our churches. The result is that churches and pastors are paralyzed by fear and avoidance of conflict. ABCRM recognizes that pastors and churches need to develop better conflict transformation skills. For this reason, one of our areas of focus for 2006 is to help pastors and

laity in churches to develop conflict transformation skills. These key leaders need to be able to identify the real issues that are creating the conflict and the tools to develop a strategy to deal with these issues instead of getting side tracked by peripheral issues. A first step in this process is developing the skill of empathic, active listening. We will also explore how our attitudes toward conflict affect the results we get out of conflict.

We will provide opportunities for pastors and laity to develop Conflict Transformation skills.

- Workshops will be held at the 2006 Gathering.
- We will contract with conflict transformation specialists to provide extensive training.



Conflict is normal and can be constructive.

- Additionally, when outside groups hold conflict transformation events in the geographical area, churches will be notified about the opportunity to attend these events.

Unfortunately, in some congregations, the level of conflict is too high for the congregation to deal with it “in house.” ABCRM will work with the congregation to find an outside conflict specialist to work with the congregation. Ministry and Mission Coaches will also receive specialized training to help them identify conflict and lead congregations to conflict transformation.

Conflict is normal and can be constructive. It becomes a problem when it is rooted in selfishness: “I want what I want when I want it!”) rather than in an effort to find ways to work out our differences with one another. It is this inordinate concern for self that leads to the bickering and resentment which are often the by-products of conflict.

Our Region’s purpose statement affirms: “*The ABCRM is a supportive relational community of churches and spiritual leaders, committed to Jesus Christ, collaborating to motivate, stimulate, and encourage each other to discern, discover, and obey the call of God in their sphere of influence.*” We are a covenanting group of disciples who are “Discovering God Together.” Let’s learn how to live, work, and play together!

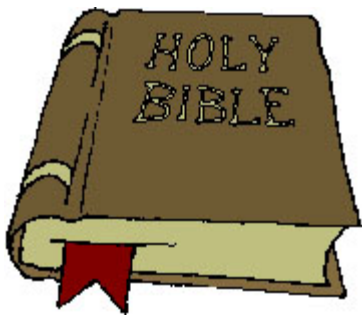
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Biblical Leadership Principles

Have you ever made the statement, “I wish that we had more leaders in our church”? Are the same people being asked over and over again to lead? Many churches are experiencing a leadership void.

This is nothing new. In Acts 6 the early Church faced a leadership challenge too. The Grecian Jews were complaining that their widows were being overlooked when the food was being distributed. The Twelve solved the problem by calling all the disciples together and appointing seven who were known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom and gave the responsibility over to them. It worked. In Acts 6:7, Luke tells us that because more leaders were chosen, the Word of God spread, and the number of disciples increased.

The selection of leaders is crucial. The process of choosing leaders apart from their spiritual qualifications will lead to unspiritual leadership. However, being spiritual is not enough. There must be a blending of spirituality and wisdom. Therefore, wisdom given by God through the Holy Spirit is a prerequisite for effective leadership.



Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:2, “. . .and the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men [and

women] who will also be qualified to teach others” (NIV).

I believe Paul is saying, “Find the right person for the right job and things will happen.” Thoughtful delegation will save the leader the frustrating experience of square pegs attempting to serve in round holes.

Moses’ father-in-law gave him some good advice. Jethro said, “What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone (Exodus 18:17b-18 NIV). Moses listened to him and chose capable people to help carry the load. Those who could have become his critics were now his allies. More importantly, Moses laid the ground work for effective leadership after his death. Wise leaders multiply themselves by developing other leaders.

It is not easy to find strong dependable leaders. When Samuel was looking for a new king of Israel, he was told by God in 2 Samuel 16:7, “. . . Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (NIV).

A.W. Tozer also gave some great advice on selecting leaders. He said, “A true and safe leader is likely to be one who has no desire to lead, but is forced into a position by inward pressure of the Holy Spirit and the press of circumstances. . . . The person who is ambitious to lead is disqualified as a leader. The true

The process of choosing leaders apart from their spiritual qualifications will lead to unspiritual leadership.

Thoughtful delegation will save the leader the frustrating experience of square pegs attempting to serve in round holes.

Wise leaders multiply themselves by developing other leaders.

leader will have no desire to lord it over God’s heritage, but will be humble, gentle, self-sacrificing and altogether ready to follow when the spirit chooses another to lead.”*

Perhaps the reason we are experiencing a lack of leadership is that we have not developed a process to discover and equip leaders. As we develop that process, our leadership void will be filled not only in our churches, but also within our Region.

*Quoted by Joel Santos in his sermon, “Legacy of Spiritual Leadership,” September, 2004.

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First Baptist Church of Grand Junction Celebrates 123 Years of Love

First Baptist Church of Grand Junction celebrated their annual Anniversary Sunday on February 12, 2006 with a full weekend of activities centered on the visit of their former pastor, Elroy "Caleb" Shikles. At the age of 93, he wanted to share memories and say farewell to the last parish he served before he and Carol retired.

The monthly AB Men's Prayer Breakfast took place on Saturday morning with 20 men in attendance. The annual ABW Ministries Valentines event was held on Saturday evening. Everyone was encouraged to bring a friend and/or Valentine. This event was attended by 38 people. There was food, fellowship, and fun—standard fare for a Baptist gathering.

Anniversary Sunday began with a brunch with Pastor Shikles as the guest of honor. Many people attended and had the opportunity to visit with him. During the combined worship service, Elroy shared memories and said thanks and farewell, indicating that he is now ready to change his residence to heaven.

He may be contacted in the following ways:

- by email at ceshikles@aol.com,
 - by phone at 858-581-8416
 - by cell phone: 858-705-3308, and
 - by snail mail at 2404 Loring Street, #211, San Diego, CA 92109.
- He has issued a standing invitation to anyone to join him for lunch at his retirement residence. Simply contact him and make arrangements. You may also check out his website at www.grandpacaleb.com.



Current Pastor Scott Hogue and honored guest, Pastor Elroy Shikles.

Pastor Shikles had this to say by e-mail after he returned home:

"Thanks to my family and ministerial friends: What a wonderful weekend in Grand Junction, CO! Truly the pastors and people treated me royally. Scott Hogue and Jim Witt built the 123rd anniversary around my presence after nearly 40 years. No pastor could be so blessed."

*Submitted by Jim Witt
Minister to Senior Adults
FBC/Grand Junction*

ABW Ministries of Wyoming Summer Conference

June 16-17

at First Baptist Church of Lander
with Alicia Luquin
as Guest Speaker

Alicia lives in California, serves on the national board as the Western Coordinator. She previously coordinated the national

AB Girls ministry and has a beautiful rapport with young women.

Youth Priority

Youth Mission Trip

Hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents were left homeless following Hurricane Katrina. Now you can be a part of rebuilding Gulfport, MS. The American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains is sponsoring the Gulf Mission Project for high school (14+ yrs) and college age students. July 21-July 30, 2006.

More information is available through your church office or on the Region website at

http://www.abcrm.org/gulf_mission_2006.htm



Camping for Colorado's Front Range and Eastern Plains

Camping for churches along Colorado's Front Range and those on the Eastern Plains will be radically different in 2006.

- Camps will be held at Quaker Ridge Camp near Woodland Park, CO.
- New activities will be added to the schedule including horseback riding and a swimming pool.
- All camps will be held simultaneously June 19-24. Yes, because of scheduling at Quaker Ridge, we must begin Monday afternoon.

More information is available through your church office or on the Region's website at

<http://www.abcrm.org/ministries/camping.htm>

Northern Front Range Cluster Churches Get Acquainted

On Sunday afternoon, February 26th, American Baptists from Northern Front Range Cluster churches gathered in Fort Collins. Host pastor, Dan Vincent, along with members of the American Baptist Church of Fort Collins provided a warm welcome.

“Getting to Know You” was the theme and goal of the gathering. Churches in the Northern Front Range Cluster were originally members of three former ABCRM Areas, so getting acquainted is vital during the beginning stages of their work together. To help accomplish this goal, the planning team invited representatives of three of the congregations to speak about their church’s unique ministries.

among the founders of the work which began in 1975. It is the purpose of this group to speak to issues of community concern and mobilize faith-based groups to meet the housing, food, health, and social needs of marginalized people. Special projects include supporting the local food bank by canning food and gleaning, Crop Walk, homelessness prevention, and response to immediate needs such as Hurricane Katrina. ABC/FC not only supports the interfaith work by providing hearty volunteers; the church budget also includes a line item designated for Interfaith Ministries. Bill Moseley expressed appreciation for the opportunity to join with people from other faith communities to do meaningful ministry.

participate in this ministry visit people in nursing homes and care centers and produce puppet shows. They meet once a month for about two hours, and during that time they are preparing for ministry. Tom Wheeler noted that each one of the children is willing to lead in prayer for the group as well as in public worship. When he asked one girl if she would lead in prayer, she responded, “Certainly, I’d always be willing to talk to my God.” What an example for all of us!

Doug Carr, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church (CBC) in Cheyenne, WY, gave an overview of the Prison Ministry in which they are involved. Clinton Lewis, associate pastor, described the work in more detail, defining it as basic Christian counseling. Lewis and Carr visit inmates, listen to them, address their spiritual needs, offer them hope in Jesus, and lead worship six to seven times a year. Judy Jacobs, executive direction of Bethel Outreach Ministries, and also a member of CBC, spoke about her city-wide network that exists to help inmates obtain food, housing, and furniture at the time they are released. She announced that Bethel Outreach Ministries has recently received a grant from Faith Initiatives of Wyoming to purchase food from the Wyoming Food Bank for distribution to those who are being released.



Presenters: (l to r) Tom Wheeler, Bill Moseley, Clinton Lewis, Doug Carr, Judy Jacobs.

Bill Moseley, Mission Coordinator at the American Baptist Church of Fort Collins, CO (ABC/FC), spoke about the Interfaith Ministries to which he is the church’s official representative. ABC/FC has a long history with Interfaith Ministries. Pastor Emeritus Don Lambert was

Tom Wheeler, pastor of First Baptist Church in Fort Morgan, CO, detailed their church’s Kreative Kids Ministry—a ministry *to* kids and *by* kids. Those who lead the Kreative Kids Ministry affirm that children can do a significant work in our communities. The children who

Music, food, and fellowship were additional components of the cluster gathering. (Additional pictures may be viewed on the Cluster page of the Region’s website.) The Northern Front Range Cluster churches will meet again in Greeley during August. Watch for details.



Xplore God's word and world
 Xamine your own priorities
 Xperience mission
 Xercise faith
 Xtend your hands
 Xpand your world view

Xperience Jesus' call to mission
 like you have never imagined.

The Xtreme Team is designed to connect young adults with the global mission of American Baptists. The purpose is to grow a passion and interest in mission for the here and now as well as to cultivate global mission leadership for the future. One Xtreme Team in 2006 will be going to Brazil and the other to Bolivia!

The Xtreme Team is called Xtreme for a reason! It's not your everyday mission trip. The team members are not told what they will be doing on a daily basis; they are not told who else is going on the trip; they are not given any details about the trip at all. All they know for sure is which country they will visit and when they will arrive and depart. The rest is a mystery. It's an intense Faith Walk in following Jesus to the Xtreme!

The trip begins with orientation where the team members meet for the first time. Once the team completes the orientation, they are sent off to the destination country to begin their Xtreme mission Xperience. During the time in-country, Xfiles (clues about what's next) are prepared by the leaders.

The daily events of the Xtreme team are based on the Xtreme Team learning model which is composed of the following principles:

- XPERIENCE a variety of "mission," mission-related issues, and people involved in mission;
- XTEND your hand of friendship and service to people of a different culture and/or faith;
- XPAND your mind by encountering different ways of thinking, communicating, relating, and behaving and having your current patterns in those areas challenged;
- XAMINE your values, priorities, commitments, and responsibilities in light of those held by people of another culture and those involved in global mission;
- XERCISE your faith as you go to Xtremes in crossing culture and are Xposed to Xtremes in climate, standards and quality of living, religions and global issues;
- XPLORE God's word and world, searching for the whole of Christian mission.

Doesn't this sound Xciting? It is! It is also Xciting to see how lives are being changed through the Xtreme Team. Young adults are being given

an opportunity to serve God in a way that is meaningful to them.

Each team will start off their Xperience with an orientation at Judson College in Elgin, IL on June 28. The teams will then spend several weeks in the host countries Xperiencing mission firsthand beginning July 2. They return for debriefing and to participate in the 2006 World Mission Conference in Green Lake, WI on July 26. Everyone will return home on August 5.

Each participant is asked to contribute \$3900 which will cover food, transportation, and accommodation costs during the trip. You can find out a lot about past Xtreme teams at www.xtremeteamonline.org. There you will find journals and pictures from teams that went to South Africa, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Japan, India, and more. You will also find a collection of stories from our 2005 teams that went to the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Georgia.

Questions? Want a brochure and a short video? Contact staff person Angela.Sudermann@abc-usa.org. Time is running out!

Movin' Toward the Maker **with Vacation Bible School 2006**

It's that time again—time to plan for 2006 Vacation Bible School. Recently your church office received the Judson Press VBS kit offering complete detailed information on each of the following programs:

- ***Time Stone Travelers*** from Cook Communications invites kids to visit discovery sites in their quest to learn more about the Ten Commandments.
- ***Gospel Express***, produced by Augsburg Fortress Press, brings children aboard God's Celebration Train for a fast-moving adventure.
- ***Fiesta!*** from Group Publishing will get kids "fired up" about Jesus. New this year is an Operation Kid-to-Kid™ project.

- ***Journey Into the Hush Arbor: Living in the Imagination of God*** (Abingdon Press) is an Afrocentric intergeneration VBS program creating a heritage-rich experience.

- ***The Jesus Family Reunion*** from Urban Ministries, Inc. is a ten-day program for African American Christians of all ages.

Each program has built-in flexibility to meet your needs and offers complete support materials and planning resources. Unused materials may be returned if postmarked within 30 days of the date of shipment. When you purchase VBS materials from Judson Press, you support the American Baptist commitment to provide resources for disciple-making churches.

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