



# The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

## Reconciliation: Our Transformation Through Conflict

**J**UST BEFORE COMING TO NATIONAL Ministries, I spent a week in Los Angeles as one of six Americans paired with colleagues from South Africa in an intensive workshop on community conflict transformation.

Over 300 participants, mostly from North America but several from Africa and Asia, gathered to learn skills in conflict analysis, deep listening sensitivity, and a mediation process that is applicable for conflict resolution, but focuses more directly on developing relationships. All elements of the process were directed toward developing the capacity to be a mediating presence with a commitment to justice in the midst of conflict.

The training sessions were supplemented by worship and celebration events that included deeply moving testimonies from South African political and religious leaders committed to a reconciled society in which justice is served, the goal being to liberate everyone from the horrors of the past. The event more than fulfilled the prayer of Bishop Tutu, who could not attend, that it be a "roaring success."

On evaluation forms, participants consistently spoke of "transformative moments" during the training as they explored their own attitudes toward and experiences of conflict and as they risked listening deeply to one another. These individuals, representing a variety of faith backgrounds, were willing to step outside their comfort zones as part of an effort to transform cultural, ethnic, and community conflict into an opportunity for change, and for a deeper appreciation of the differences among us.

My own presence at the consultation as a trainer resulted from my participation in a three-year training program in Philadelphia with colleagues from African-American Interdenominational Ministries, Inc. the Korean Clergy Council, the Hispanic Clergy Council, and other representatives from the Philadelphia Leadership Council. Collectively our group was convened as Christians Empowered for Reconciliation with Justice. The Plowshares Institute, located in Simsbury, CT, conducted our program. The program was similar to one the Institute had developed in South Africa at the request of several parties, including Bishop Tutu.

Our goal was not just to be trained in a "technique" or "method." Rather, it was to come to know one another in such a way that the boundaries between us and our lives would not stand as barriers. It was to know one another in such a way that our differences and distinctions would not create distance among us or distortions in the way we related and reacted to each individual's "world of meaning." In short, we were seeking to be "reconciled."

Our three-year program concluded with a two-week stay in South Africa that revolved around meeting individuals who routinely use all or parts of the training in a variety of contexts. Some of those we visited work in prisons and youth development agencies. Some help resolve labor disputes. Others work in neighborhoods to bring about change and to empower people to turn potential conflict into constructive possibilities.

Following the completion of the Plowshares program, but prior to the Los Angeles event, I served as a coach for a similar event in a major American city in which the mayor's office recognized the value of this initiative in the face of racial strife.

As director of Reconciliation Ministries for National Ministries,  
*(continued on page 2)*

## Reconciliation. . .

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I have a vision and a goal for our American Baptist family: to train American Baptists in the process previously described so that a significant number of our churches will be empowered to be intentionally present within their communities. Those who take part in this training program will be better equipped to reduce conflict, while working for justice and seeking the shalom of deeper relationships.

I do not mean to suggest that our churches and their members are not already engaged in many ways in such activity. But there are many who would like to become more involved and don't know how. Or perhaps they are involved, but would like to develop more proactive skills.

All of us recognize that the story of Jesus Christ is wondrous because it is the message that *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them"* (1Corinthians 5:19). We have been given the ministry of reconciliation, that is, the task of sharing this word and this reconciliation with the world. But we also know that such ministry calls us to *"a more excellent way"* in response to the turmoil of our worlds, near and far.

God's Word strengthens and guides us:

- *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God"* (Matthew 5:9).
- *"If it is possible, so far as it depends on you. Live peaceably with all"* (Romans 12:18).
- *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:21).

These and other passages acknowledge the reality of conflict in the world, and even within the church. Oftentimes it is not conflict itself that is the problem, but rather how we respond to it. The very creation of a board of deacons in Acts 6:17 is the story of a multi-cultural conflict—even confrontation—that was rooted in an inequitable distribution of resources within the community. The conflict featured a preferential attention to the more familiar, the easier to understand, i.e., those who enjoyed more ready access to the apostolic ear. This was a conflict familiar to the world that had found a home within the church.

To their credit and our benefit, the apostles acknowledged the conflict and even went beyond merely ending it or managing it. They listened. And by listening, they empowered those who previously felt left out and unheard. In doing that, they acknowledged the legitimacy of those who previously felt insignificant. It is a case study in conflict transformation.

Whether it is within the church or within the community in which the church is located, God has called us to be peacemakers—to be wise as serpents, yet harmless as doves. Our neighborhoods and communities are the meeting places of ever more diverse populations, all seeking not only a better material life, but the opportunity to celebrate the riches of their cultural identities.

So many things can go wrong in our efforts to reach out to others. Subtle differences in cultural customs and behavior can be fascinating, but they can also provide occasion for misunderstanding. To cite just one example, in some cultures looking someone directly in the eye while

speaking is considered disrespectful, while in other cultures not to do so is considered suspicious. From such tiny differences hurts can arise and relationships can be distorted, resulting in conflict. When such conflict takes place in the context of a perceived competition for limited resources or the fear of falling behind "them," communities experience their own particular kind of "cold war." In such settings, the Church has an opportunity to create an environment where differences are creatively explored and where people can be trusted to help mediate a conflict or identify those who can.

In cases where issues of justice are clearly at stake in the conflict, mediation practices may serve to help build coalitions, to envision creative ways of clarifying the issues, and to engage the "powers that be" to pursue peace, justice, and reconciliation.

I look forward to meeting more of our American Baptist family at conferences, workshops, and invitational events where we can explore the possibilities and opportunities for training in community conflict transformation. Together, we can model the reconciling message of our Lord and Savior by bringing peace to our communities and to our world.



*Dwight Lundgren  
Director, Reconciliation Ministries  
National Ministries, ABCUSA  
Dwight held a training session for  
ABCRM staff in March 2006.*

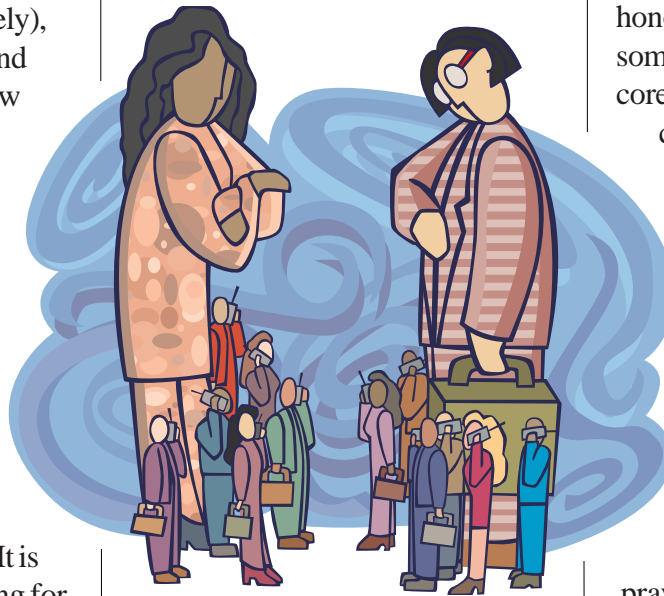
## Dialogue as an Alternative

As we continue to struggle with the issue of human sexuality in our Region following the 2005 Gathering, it seemed to some of us that the models we had been using to reach agreement were of little use. This was evident at some of our business sessions last October. People were presenting their positions (often quite articulately), but the desire/ability to hear and understand other points of view was getting lost in the process. The “debate model” has some advantages, but it falls short when one of the goals is to keep relationships intact between individuals – and churches – who differ strongly on divisive issues.

The dialogue model represents an effort to overcome these deficiencies. It is based on the idea that by caring for relationships first, we open the door to solutions we might otherwise miss. It requires getting to know one another better and hearing the viewpoints of others in a respectful way. It means finding the values we hold in common. Perhaps most important, it means holding on to the values that are important to us while acknowledging differing points of view. This is a difficult, but not impossible, tension with which to live.

American Baptists have been faced with this challenge since the inception of the denomination. Historically, deep differences have arisen over acceptable translations of Scripture, abortion, divorce,

women in ministry, charismatic approaches to worship, and now human sexuality. While debates may have clarified what opposing sides believed, they have also reduced the conversations to blaming, labeling, name-calling, and demonizing the other side.



Dialogue and careful deliberation may carry us past these pitfalls. The question dialogue repeatedly asks is, “What steps do we need to take together to move forward in concert with one another?”

Admittedly, we’re asking a lot of those who participate in dialogue. The hope is that they will tell their own stories effectively, discern the degree to which they’ve been heard by others, and trust and respect others regardless of differing or controversial points of view. In dialogue we’re encouraged not only to listen, but also to be curious about others’ stories

and perspectives (regardless how contrary they might be), to be compassionate and non-judgmental, and to express our point of view steadfastly in the face of critical analysis.

There is no guarantee that the dialogic process will be “successful” as we struggle with the issue of human sexuality. But from a Baptist perspective, dialogue honors the tenet of soul freedom, something that has always been a core principle for us. Soul freedom challenges the notion that we must be in perfect accord in our beliefs before we can have fellowship with one another. We can differ in our understanding of scriptural interpretation, the role of social justice, or our approach to worship, and still find common ground in our shared belief in Jesus Christ as our Savior. My prayer is that God will be present in our deliberations so we can continue to serve together in the kingdom of faith.



*Mike Sayler  
Senior Pastor  
First Baptist Church  
Colorado Springs, CO  
President of ABCRM Ministers  
Council and Facilitator of the  
Region’s Human Sexuality  
Task Force*

## Hurricane Season: Surviving the Storms of Church Conflict



ONCE AGAIN, FEMA IS THE focus of many news reports. Will they be ready for another hurricane season? What if this season is worse than last year? Will people evacuate their homes? Will government, social and religious agencies be able to respond more rapidly than last year?

This is also a time of great storms within churches. Churches are firing or forcing a higher percentage of pastors to resign. More and more clergy are dropping out of ministry. People are walking away from local congregations because of conflict. Everyone involved leaves damaged to one degree or another. What are we doing to prepare for these storms? Will we do conflict better next time? Who will get hurt in the next storm?

Even nine months later, we have a difficult time coming to grips with the devastation of Hurricane Katrina: billions of dollars in damage, more than a thousand lives lost and a city paralyzed for years to come. We like simple answers. We want to find someone to blame. That someone was Michael Brown, the director of FEMA. The reality of Katrina is that it was a total systemic failure. No adequate plan existed for evacuating the population of New Orleans. Years of drilling for oil in the Gulf of Mexico left the wetlands that protected New Orleans damaged. The

dikes protecting the city were clearly inadequate. Many even attribute the severity of the 2005 hurricane season to global warming. Yes, FEMA failed the people of the Gulf Coast; however, to blame one person is patently unfair.

In churches, we often find the same dynamic. After years of decline and aging of the congregation, the church wakes up to the desperation of their current situation. They often turn to the pastor and ask, "What are you going to do about this?" In many situations, no matter how hard the pastor works, the congregation's decline continues. In other situations, poor leadership by the pastor hastens the decline of the congregation. Soon after this, a special meeting of the congregation or deacons is called to assess blame. (Often, the pastor took on the blame long before the congregation attributes it to him or her.) Shortly after that, the pastor is looking for a new job or new career.

The reality is that the church is a system. Firing the pastor will not solve the problems any more than the resignation of Michael Brown changed the way FEMA responded. In most situations, the same problems will exist no matter who is the pastor. Until we deal with problems systemically, transformation will not occur.

In the past 20 years, a great deal of research has been done on the systemic nature of congregations. Edwin H. Friedman led this work to apply family systems theory to local congregations (*see resource list, page 5*) Friedman brought the ideas and language of systems theory into the understanding of church life. Key concepts such as triangling, self-

differentiation, anxiety, reactivity and non-anxious presence began to be applied not just to families in a congregation, but to the whole congregation.

As a result of the work of Friedman and others, pastors and lay leaders have been given powerful new tools for dealing with conflict and change in local congregations. As leaders examine their own reactivity (the way we react to emotionally charged situations) developed in childhood and carried into their churches, they are better equipped to be a less-anxious presence in the midst of change and conflict and change. As these leaders further define their own self, instead of reacting out of a role defined for them, they can lead through the storms of congregational life. Jim Herrington has taken these principles and applied them specifically to the process of leading a congregation through change (*see resource list, page 5*).

The Gulf Coast will experience several hurricanes this summer. Nothing will change this. The goal is to stop blaming one or two people or agencies and get on with the preparations for the season. Likewise, every congregation will experience conflict. The challenge is to be prepared for the inevitable conflict and to survive or even thrive in the process.



*Mike Oldham  
Ministry and Mission Coach  
for Western Slope  
and SE Colorado/NM*

## Transformative Power of Conflict

**A** MENTOR AND FRIEND ONCE told me, “Conflict in our churches is a beautiful thing.” When we allow for it, through conflict, we are able to see different perspectives that are not our own, our world is enlarged, and we can embrace others who are different and have a different thought. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that we have to surrender our principal stands on critical issues, but it does open up ways for us to work beyond our differences, and to embrace one another as members of the body of Christ.

Despite evidence that some of our churches are attracting new members in record numbers, issues such as female leadership in the church, homosexuality, loss of denominational identity, church splits within denominations, nontraditional interpretations of Scripture, and cross-faith ecumenical activities have polarized mainline Protestant denominations, rendering the church as a helpless institution. Other issues of importance include the role of the church in an increasingly multicultural world and the church’s response to sociological realities, including homelessness, domestic violence, child physical and sexual abuse, community health, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and domestic and international terrorism.

I continue to ponder the conversation that Jesus was having with his disciples recorded by John in chapter 10 and verses 14 through 16, “*I have other sheep, which are not of this fold.*” Who was Jesus talking about? It seems that even Jesus is not expecting for us to be “cookie cutter” Christians who think alike and act alike and make the same decisions alike. Love is the theme of the Bible,

and the love of God is big enough and broad enough to contain the entire human family. It seems the best thing we can do as a fold is learn the value of diversity even in the midst of conflict.

Conflict is a part of human nature, having existed since Adam and Eve and their argument about whether or not God gave them permission to eat that appealing piece of fruit in the Garden of Eden. Throughout history, human conflicts have arisen most often from needs related to territoriality. The survival of the human species, in the earliest days of human kind, depended on the ability to establish and protect territory. The species have changed, but these dynamics remain relevant in our modern era and lead to anger and aggression, ranging from interpersonal relationship problems to church conflicts to organized wars to genocide.

Conflict can be addressed in healthy ways and can lead to a deepening of our theological insight while strengthening our mission to change the world through love. The love of God does not insist on its own rights or its own way, because it is not self-seeking. The church, then, is an excellent place to begin strategically rethinking ways to strengthen ourselves, change real perceptions and misperceptions, and build partnerships in God’s name and for God’s sake. What a transformative power!



*Benjamin Reynolds  
Senior Minister  
Emmanuel Church*

## Resource List for Conflict Transformation

**Augsburger, David**, *Caring Enough to Confront: How to Understand and Express Your Deepest Feelings Toward Others*, Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973.

**Friedman, Edwin H.**, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, New York: The Guilford Press, 1985.

**Herrington, Jim, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr**, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

**Herrington, Jim, R Robert Creech, Trisha Taylor**, *The Leader’s Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

**Richardson, Ronald W.**, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor’s Own Family*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

**Scazzero, Peter**, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press, 2003.

*The Clergy Clinic*, a three part training in Systems Theory sponsored by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, <http://www.lmpeacecenter.org> .

**Resource Person:** ABCRM is working with Arlene Bowie in the area of Conflict Transformation. She is available to lead workshops and work directly with congregations to deal with conflict. You can contact her through Mike Oldham at [moldham@abcr.org](mailto:moldham@abcr.org).

## Conflict Transformation Is Not an Oxymoron

At first glance, “conflict transformation” seems enigmatic, or at the very least, two terms which are in conflict with one another: an oxymoron. In any case, the term “conflict transformation” belies its sometimes complicated intricacies.



Dennis Sandhole\* says that the trick in conflict transformation is to get to the “edge of the chaos” in any conflictual relationship and stay there and do your work. This, of course, begs the question: what or where is this “edge of chaos”? The simple answer is that it is to be found between an individual’s or group’s “inner space” which consists of a set of experiences that affects a person or group adversely and what becomes the “chosen trauma” that serves as a flashpoint of reference when facing the “other.” This “other” may be *reality* as it actually exists or an adversary

\*Dennis Sandhole is a professor at George Mason University.

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which plays a role both in an individual’s or group’s inner recollection of how events are interpreted and acted on in the real world.

In conflict transformation, change begins with the individual and with the individual’s inner worldview. One common, but mistaken, approach is to attempt change in a leader’s inner space or worldview. This is a kind of shorthand approach to conflict transformation with the thinking being that to change a leader’s view is produce an eventual change in an entire group. This is conflict transformation of only one person, if that. What happens in reality is called a “negative peace” which falls far short of what in Hebrew is “*shalom*”—a preference and a preponderance of peace, not just an absence of violence.

Denominations have taken another tact away from conflict transformation over the past several years with regard to “issues of the day” by attempting to engage in what is called an “argument of fact” when really we/they are engaging in an “argument of attitude.” In an argument of attitude, one party believes something to be true or right and attempts to persuade a second party with a barrage of anecdotal stories or fact-like points. The problem arises when the second party holds a contrary belief to the extent that no amount of stories or points affect any change in thinking. As a matter of fact, often in an attempt to change another’s opinion in this way, the opposite happens. Namely, the second party becomes more entrenched in their position. There is no end to this revolving-door of

**Conflict transformation is engaging in caring conversation which chips away at internal bias or misinformation, person by person, and learning to live with the pieces that do not fit.**

conflict. As a matter of fact, even when solid factual information is introduced into an argument of attitude, oftentimes it is lost in the heat of the moment.

Conflict transformation is not praying for someone to finally “see the light.” It is not voting a person into office who holds your position to make others do what you think is right. Rather, it is engaging in caring conversation which “chips” away at internal bias or misinformation, person by person, and learning to live with the pieces that do not fit. And it’s helpful to remember that there are arguments of fact which can be resolved by what my conflict resolution professor used to say, “Sometimes the son-of-a-gun just may be right!”



*Gary Bowser  
Senior Minister  
First Baptist Church, Denver  
former ABCRM staff person*

## A Look at Avoidable Escalation Avoiding the Avoidable



A common thread runs through most of the conflicts to which I have been privy. This thread has two closely wound fibers: confusion and continuation.

### Let's look first at confusion.

As the plaintiff in a particular conflicted situation, I am unhappy and perceive that I was treated poorly. In my discontent, I often fail to sort out the difference between "He/she wronged me" and "I didn't get my way" or "I didn't like what happened." In the reaction time, especially as I stew over the incident, my rationalizations muddy the distinction between whether or not the person sinned against me or it was simply a case of my not getting my way.

There is a significant difference between being sinned against and being unhappy with the action of another. So often, first reactions do not include critical thinking. As I lose clarity, I express unhappiness with the person instead of with the action. And then, Satan helps me accuse my brother or sister.

**Now, let's examine the second fiber—continuation.** If I hang on to the event and bring it to mind repeatedly, my vision becomes even more clouded. Not only am I unable to see the difference between the person and the action, but my anger, resentment, or frustration also grows. My energy and motiva-

tion for fellowship are weakened. I build up a head of steam and am liable to blow up, venting in ways that are unhealthy for relationship. As time passes, I develop a "hypercritical" spirit, in that I continue to find fault and feed my unhappiness. I find reasons to justify my frustration and my withdrawal. Satan immobilizes me right at the point where I need to maintain unity and connections with others.

The longer I continue, the more blurred the issue becomes. Yet my analysis is crystal clear to me. Eventually my position hardens, for I'm convinced I'm right.

What's a Christian to do? Take steps toward de-escalation; move to remove "continuation."

### Steps Toward De-escalation

**First**, I need to vent early. My prayer closet is a wonderful place to begin. Taking seriously the command to "*not let the sun go down on my anger*" (Ephesians 4:26), I pour out my heart to God in prayer. Transparency before Christ is the key (see 2 Corinthians 3:18). This could be a good time to engage a prayer partner for confidential discussion and prayers.

**Second**, as I remember and revisit the incident, I need to make a choice to not nourish my unhappiness. The feeding of any rationalization or self-defense is evidence that I am making an issue of the event.

**Third**, I take the time to prayerfully consider other possible interpretations of the event. Here's where I

### Steps Toward De-escalation

1. Vent early.
2. Stop nurturing personal unhappiness.
3. Prayerfully consider other interpretations.
4. Take steps to refocus on the positives.

bring to the Lord any desire to get my own way and, in prayer, release my partner in faith from my expectations. I decide that my interpretation is not going to be the one that I maintain, and I choose to be a blessing to my brother or sister. If I find that I have actually been sinned against, then I go to my sister or brother and seek reconciliation.

**Fourth**, I take positive steps in my thought-life concerning the details on which I will focus as I look at the one who has "bothered" me. I begin to celebrate the basis and nature of our unity, and celebrate before God the giftedness of my brother or sister. Then I attribute goodness to the other. Spending time together and doing something to bless my brother or sister help carry me beyond my rationalizations and temptations.

When I follow these steps, I am serious about "*making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Ephesians 4:3). So be it among us who carry the name Christian.

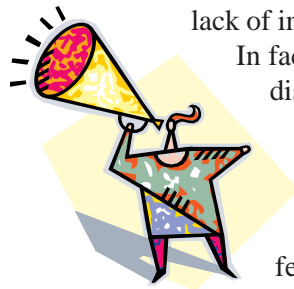
*David Heintzleman*  
Interim Pastor  
First Baptist Church  
Casper, WY

## It's Not About the Color Purple After All

**Conflict transformation:** these two words are seldom used in the same sentence unless you have read a current book or attended a recent class that deals with conflict. Most of us have spent years avoiding conflict, listening to conflicting reports, living among conflicting values, and being in conflict with everyone from our child with the purple hair to the neighbor with the purple house. In the church we don't see much purple hair on anyone under 60, because in most churches youthful purple hair and the current congregation don't mix well. In fact, churches don't have much conflict about purple unless it is a committee's choice for the new sanctuary carpet. Even then, conflict is often resolved by calling a new committee, taking the peer-pressure-in-the-parking-lot route, or calling for a vote of the whole congregation to choose between ecru and eggplant.

**Conflict is.** Conflict is part of creation from the beginning when differences were named and celebrated—God and humans, humans and animals, man and woman. Differences are not bad. In fact, differences give us a gift of added wisdom for problem solving and creative visioning. Nevertheless, differences can be difficult. Different opinions, viewpoints, experiences, preferences, and values often lead to stress, and differences that are stressful lead to conflict.

Stress-filled differences bring out very human emotional responses. These emotional responses can circle back and exacerbate the conflict. Angry voices can get louder, longer, and more certain. At the same time, fearful voices become quieter, convinced of their



lack of importance. In fact, they may disappear altogether. These quiet, sometimes fearful voices become non-contributing voices that are left feeling silenced. If we are going to begin a new journey that moves us from conflict winning/losing to conflict transformation, we must first acknowledge that feelings—sometimes unexpected and uncomfortable feelings—will surface. We must name and honor these feelings. We must also acknowledge and seek out feelings and voices that might be missing.

After we have heard all voices clearly, we can move into a concrete—“*con-creat*”—process of conflict resolution that addresses the purple carpet and music in worship. The first part of this process is to name the goals we wish to achieve. In our carpet/music case, the goals might be new carpet for our beautiful worship space, or a community that sings passionately in praise to God. Note that the goals are neither preferences of carpet color nor music style. These goals are based on broad, consensus community values: beautiful worship space and passionate praise. While achieving goals is important, maintaining community—staying in relationship with one another—is at least equally important. If we commit ourselves to transformative conflict resolution, we commit to achieve our goals—to choose the carpet and the music—*together*. As the Church, we must meet our goals *in community* or discount and leave out part of the

body or break the body apart altogether.

When we move into the realm of conflict transformation, we acknowledge that conflict resolution is more than holding positions, having right and wrong answers, and taking a final win/lose vote. We acknowledge that conflict involves people with varied preferences. We acknowledge that conflict arises from problems that likely have many possible solutions. Conflict transformation values diversity and the creative process of community problem-solving. Conflict transformation values both relationships and goals equally and passionately.

Conflict transformation not only transforms the way we deal with conflict, but it also transforms the conflicted community itself. The transformed community becomes stronger because it has struggled and not broken apart. The transformed community is more confident having addressed a difficult problem and won together. The transformed community is more trusting of one another, more hopeful and open as it approaches its next time of conflict. Indeed, it is more committed to healthy body life because it recognizes, values, and responds to the needs of the body and each of its parts.

In our local church we still tend to take positions and votes. However, we are having conversations about conflict transformation. We are beginning to understand that speaking—*everyone, that is,*—and listening—*to everyone, that is,*—are the first steps.

*Nancy Darnell, Senior Minister  
First Baptist Church, Boulder, CO  
Chair of the Region's  
Department of Ministry*

## Insights into intergenerational conflict

### It's a Family Issue

James tells us to consider it pure joy when we face trials of many sorts (James 1:2). Should church conflict merit such a consideration? It can, certainly in the case of generational conflict. These conflicts occur over a number of issues: worship music, outreach ministries, ministry styles, attire, and the list goes on. I would like to address how generational conflict in the local church, as an inevitable part of family life, can provide vital opportunities for personal and corporate growth.

Usually generational conflicts arise around issues of values or tastes. Culture plays a significant role. Youth today eat different food, listen to different music, and use different technologies than their parents and grandparents. These differences impact the way everyone engages the world.

Churches can benefit by handling generational conflicts from a family systems perspective. It is too easy to simply blame a problem on others, such as the closed-mindedness of an older generation or the radical demands of a younger. There are always multiple influences and unmet expectations in family conflicts.

Using the family systems lens, redefine the problem. For example, instead of saying, "We're not growing because the older members are set in their ways," say: "In this church we have different expectations of the worship ministry." Once the problem is redefined, we can continue managing the conflict

by consulting the church's stated purpose. Mission statements serve as stabilizing mechanisms to guide the church through all kinds of conflicts.

An important question during conflict is, "Who is in control?" In the church those with the power are usually the older, parental members, who have taken responsibility for the church. These folks tend to be the agents who resist change. Those without control are the youth and new or potential members of the congregation. Conflicts between these generations can provide important platforms for meaningful interactions.

During these exchanges, those with power and influence must model Christ-like character. Be humble. Too many churches minister according to what they like and want. How does this square with Paul's direction: "... *in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others*" (Philippians 2:3-4)? Be sacrificial. Bear in mind Christ's description of love: "*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13). In addition, reflect on and develop a plan for how the church will equip future leaders and transfer power to the next generation. This is done best by initiating intergenerational mentoring relationships in which younger people can learn from older and visa versa.



Develop  
a plan  
to equip  
future  
leaders  
and  
transfer  
power  
to the  
next  
generation.

Finally, listen to each other carefully. Different generations speak different languages. Try to empathize with the positions of other godly Christians, who have joined hands with you in ministry. Dialoging on differences builds respect, which in turn develops relationships, ultimately eliminating the "us" versus "them" positions. Interactions comprised of empathic talking and listening grant occasions for glimpses into each other's hearts as well as God's will for the Church—definitely reasons to rejoice!



Kyle VanArsdol  
Class of 2006  
Denver Seminary

### Copier Available

The ABCRM Region Office has a leased copier that was being used at Black Forest Camp and Conference Center. If a church has a need for a copier that also prints in color, collates, staples, etc., the Region would turn the lease over to the interested church at a reduced cost. (See details below.)

Lanier LD 024C s/p model DF75, SR790  
1000 sheet finisher  
BRDG Unit-LD024/32C RB 2167126  
Adjustment table for SR790 PS510  
Paper Bank LD024/32C

There are 35 payments of \$275.43 left on the machine. Payments includes a complete service agreement and all toner. The Region will cut the months in half by giving the accepting church \$5,000 toward lease payments. If interested, contact Richard Salcedo at 303-988-3900, ext. 13

### Top 10 Mission Giving Churches in 2005

The following churches are recognized for their faithful contribution to United Mission in 2005:

1. Calvary Baptist/Denver
2. First Baptist/Colorado Springs
3. First Baptist/Pueblo
4. Harvey Park Baptist/Denver
5. First Baptist/Grand Junction
6. First Baptist/Cortez
7. First Baptist/Casper
8. American Baptist/Fort Collins
9. First Baptist/Laramie
10. Crossroads/Northglenn

We appreciate your faithful contributions to United Mission and the ministry and mission of the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains—a Region partnering with local churches to assist them to discover and realize their passion and purpose for ministry.

RMAB 5/31/06

## Two Colorado AB Women's Associations Merge

Northeastern Association of Colorado AB Women's Ministries has joined Northern Association in order to enhance the ministries of both associations. This combined group is busily cooperating to be the hostesses for the Colorado AB Women's and Girls' Conference to be held at American Baptist Church, 600 South Shields Street, Fort Collins, on June 9-11. All women and girls in the Region are invited to attend this Conference which will feature three missionary speakers, a variety of workshops and activities, a mission fair, inspiration, and lots of music, laughter and fellowship.



The expanded Northern Association now includes the AB Women's Ministries groups from Fort Collins, Fort Lupton, Fort Morgan, Greeley, Longmont, Loveland, and Sterling. Their first meeting together was at Fort Morgan First Baptist Church on April 8th. It was a joyous occasion of longtime and new friends being together for an inspirational program by Nancy Wheeler and Joy Erickson, music, and the planning and sharing of ministries the combined group can accomplish together led by Fran Lambert, Association President.

Enthusiastic conversation continued during the luncheon graciously served by the Fort Morgan women. The women left with high hopes for good attendance and a great program at Conference in Fort Collins, June 9-11.

*Betty Moseley, member  
Fort Collins, Northern Association,  
and Colorado AB Women's Ministries*



Photos courtesy of Tom Wheeler

## Historic Vote Moves Central into the Future

On Friday, May 12, the Board of Directors of Central Baptist Theological Seminary voted to move the campus to a new location that will mobilize resources to match mission. In a series of courageous acts over the past 18 months, the Board of Directors has now positioned the seminary to move forward.

The next campus also will be located at an advancing edge of development, the western section of Shawnee, KS. The seminary's third home, 6601 Monticello Road, is positioned at the intersection of Shawnee Mission Parkway and Monticello Road, between interstate I-435 and state highway K-7. "We wanted very much to remain in Kansas. American Baptist Churches in Kansas have historically supported the seminary. They have sent us students, and we sent them ministers," said President Molly Marshall. In addition to American Baptists, the seminary today has students from over 20 denominations including Cooperative Baptists, Disciples of Christ, National Baptists, and Presbyterians. A place of welcome and ecumenical openness, the seminary will continue to serve Christ and the Church through its mission of forming men and women for ministry.

In November 2005 the seminary's administration was charged with discovering and evaluating suitable opportunities for relocation. Important objectives included upgrading the quality of teaching-learning-research space, enhancing community and collegiality, increasing safety and ease of access for students, faculty and staff, reducing aggregate budget resources consumed by aging facilities.

The new location meets those objectives and positions the seminary for growth and strength. In addition to facilities space that meets the targeted footage set by the Board, the 10-acre land parcel allows for future expansion. To minimize academic disruption, the move will take place mid-summer.

### Not just in Kansas anymore...

The location in Kansas will serve as the administrative hub for Central's work as it moves forward boldly into the future. With the implementation of the Board's vision for a Teaching Church Seminary, Central also is operating four sites beyond Kansas City. This past year students have become part of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Milwaukee, Oklahoma City, Omaha, and Murfreesboro, TN. Moving the seminary to a location that matches resources with mission in Kansas will further undergird the progress made this year in the Teaching Church Initiative. "We are not only moving the campus in Kansas City, but we are also moving with the times," voiced President Marshall. "We serve as a place of learning with the churches, and we serve as a model. While remaining true to our mission and message, we must adapt and change in this world. God's church can do no less."

Central Baptist Theological Seminary, founded in 1901, is affiliated with the American Baptist Churches, USA, and in full support of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. For more information about degree programs, please contact Steve Guinn, Director of Admissions, [sguinn@cbts.edu](mailto:sguinn@cbts.edu), 1-800-677-CBTS, x107.

## Region Holds Retreat for Innovators



An Innovators Retreat was held on May 12-13. Over 40 participants gathered to gain insight into new ways of thinking.

The retreat was sponsored by ABCRM, and led by Brad Berglund of *Illuminated Journeys*.



Four goals were set for the event:

- to create the space for people to have the freedom to explore their deepest dreams and desires for ministry,
- to recognize and name the ways we limit God,
- to offer practical tools and learnable skills to think and act in innovative ways, and
- to listen to and interact with a panel of partners who have demonstrated a willingness to step out in innovative ways in their ministry.



According to Charlotte Million, the Saturday morning workshop presenter, creativity is a sustainable competitive advantage. In order to be creative, however, we need to have better ideas. Million gave attendees many tips to help them think beyond their usual patterns. She has made her PowerPoint presentations available on the ABCRM website:

[http://www.abcrm.org/events/ew\\_horizons.htm](http://www.abcrm.org/events/ew_horizons.htm)

(see page 12 for quotes from retreat)

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***New Horizons: Thinking Beyond Our Patterns***

**. . .from the panel of creative partners**

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“The purpose of the church is transformation. If transformation takes place, you’re in touch with the Gospel.”  
—*Rose Liddell*

“Have intentional conversations between generations.” —*William Golson*

“Question everything! Creative energy comes out of question more than out of certainty.”  
—*Kim Skattum*

Speaking about adult education program: “If we want people to share their faith, we need to give them the language.”  
—*Cindy Bates*

Speaking about her decision to join a 2006 Extreme Team: “Counter to my personality that wants to be in control, I know it’ll be okay. God will take care of us.”  
—*Brianna Berglund*

“Trauma births creativity. Partner with people who give you significant support.”  
—*Charlotte Million*

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***The Rocky Mountain  
American Baptist***  
is published by the  
American Baptist Churches  
of the Rocky Mountains

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Transitional Executive Minister  
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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.*

*Reprint permission is granted to  
ABCRM churches.*



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