



August 31, 2006

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

Our Transition to Mission Moves Forward



The Region Board met August 25-26 in what turned out to be a very important meeting in the Region's journey of

Transition to Mission. The Board adopted an intentional message inclusive of a mission statement and tag line. Our mission is to partner with congregations and leaders to discover their passion and realize their mission to reach the world with the love of Jesus Christ. Simply put, discover your passion and realize your mission. You will hear and see these words many times. We reaffirmed our intentional shifts and are clarifying the services we present in response to the question, "Why does the the Region exist?"

The bigger picture is that we are trying to make the journey from the Industrial Age to the Information Age. Stephen Covey in his book, *The 8th Habit*, indicates that we are, in fact, already living in the Wisdom Age. Making this journey does not mean that we exchange

the one for the other, but rather that we are adding language and skills to help us communicate and adapt to the new context. The main practical impact is in the ways we communicate and access information and resources.

I reported to the Board on the wonderful work that the staff is doing. Thai Smith and Beverley Hoffmeister continue to offer administrative support in the front-line of the office. Richard Salcedo worked hard to help us produce the independent audited financial statement indicating excellent financial management. Wayne Dvirnak and Mike Oldham continue to be an invaluable interface with churches and leadership to partner for ministry. Ingrid Dvirnak continues to do an excellent job with the newsletter enabling better communication. I am delighted to report that we have added another valuable member to the team. Mary Tellis will perform the role of Ministry and Mission Coach for Denver. We welcome Mary and look forward to her contribution to the team. (*See page 5.*)

The Board has had to deal with two major issues. Mike Sayler led the

Task Force on Human Sexuality through a process to find a position that reflects the Region's response to the challenge of human sexuality. The Board adopted the group's proposed statement with an overwhelming majority for recommendation to the delegates at the 2006 ABCRM Gathering. We thank the members of the Task Force for their diligent work during this process. (*See pages 3-4.*)

Jackie Arnold headed the Administrative Task Force whose mandate was to overhaul our Bylaws. The Board adopted these new Bylaws for recommendation to the Gathering delegates as well. I believe that these Bylaws will help us to better conduct our business and comply with the laws that govern nonprofit organizations. (*See page 3.*)

Both of these documents will be forwarded to the churches for your comment in preparation for the 2006 Gathering. We ask all churches to ensure that these comments reach the office in a timely manner as detailed on page 3 of this newsletter.

We have committed ourselves to a major effort to further improve the

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quality, regularity, and mode of communications. In our view we have to have effective communication between the Region office and leadership and churches. We also want to strengthen the communication between churches and leaders. The third level of communication we want to encourage is between our Region and the rest of the world.

Larry VanSpriell, the chair of the Gathering Planning Committee, briefed the Board on the well-executed plans for the upcoming Gathering in October. New Hope Baptist Church of Denver will be our host. I am proud of the keynote speaker. J. Alfred Smith Sr. is not only an exceptional pastor and visionary leader, but he is also a treasured family friend. Dr. Smith was our pastor while we lived in the Bay Area. Last week I represented our Region at the funeral of his wife, Mrs. Joanne Smith.

I look forward to seeing you at the 2006 ABCRM Gathering. I believe it will be both inspirational and informational. I can assure you that this event will help you discover your passion and realize your mission.

*Your partner in the Gospel,
Desmond Hoffmeister*

**Our mission is to partner
with congregations
and leaders to discover
their passion and realize
their mission to reach
the world with the love
of Jesus Christ.**

**Discover your PASSION
Realize your MISSION**

**Discover Your Passion; Realize Your Mission
Transitional Executive Board
Commits to Discover Passion
and Realize Mission**

In its recent meeting in Denver on August 25-26, 2006, the Transitional Executive Board of the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains continued to give vital leadership as our Region transitions



to mission. Clint Walker's (FBC/Colorado Springs) opening worship centered on Paul's familiar words to the

Philippians: ". . . *forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead*" (3:4-14). Board members were encouraged to move out of their comfort zones into new, challenging, growth-producing places.

Transitional Executive Minister, Desmond Hoffmeister, laid out the Region's emerging vision, message, and plan of action for 2007. Acknowledging that the leaders have spent time this year developing new Bylaws and a Region statement on human sexuality, he urged the Board to look beyond to ABCRM's unique mission and message.

Under his leadership, the following mission statement and tag line were adopted: *Our mission is to partner with congregations and leaders to discover their passion and realize their mission to reach the world with the love of Jesus Christ.*

**Discover your PASSION.
Realize your MISSION.**

Get used to these words! They're going to appear everywhere!

While Regions don't *do* evangelism, Christian education, mission, and social work, church bodies *are* heavily engaged in these very ministries. The proposed Bylaws clearly reflect the centrality of covenanting congregations and leaders. It is with all ABCRM congregations (both large and small) and all leaders (both clergy and lay) that the Region commits to partnering. Vice President Rich Schweissing summed it up like this: "Ministry is done at the level of local churches; Regions exists to serve the churches."

What does the Region bring to the partnership? Region services include pastoral placement; ongoing and consistent relational ministries; information and training; networking capabilities, pastoral presence in the midst of celebration, crisis, and every day life; and communication. When asked what the Board expects from the Region, the following additions came to light: mission support, encouragement and support of congregations, equipping and connecting, and identity enhancement.

"I feel the Region's moving!" interjected Board member Alvin Wilkerson (FBC/Flagler) at the close of the interactive presentation by Desmond Hoffmeister. The positive forward-looking momentum reflected in the opening session of the Board continued throughout the two days of meetings.

Administrative Task Force Drafts New Bylaws



Jackie Arnold (FBC/Loveland) chaired the Administrative Task Force as they drafted new Bylaws for the Region. Other members of the group included Yvonne Whisenhunt (past president of the Region, FBC/Longmont), Beth Sullivan (secretary of the Region, FBC/Cheyenne), Desmond Hoffmeister (Transitional Executive Minister), Wayne Dvirnak (Ministry and Mission Coach), and Ingrid Dvirnak (ABCRM Newsletter Editor).

During 2006, the Task Force met together in six face-to-face meetings. Additional work was done by individuals and as a group through e-mail.

It was necessary to rewrite the Region Bylaws following the passage of the Colorado Revised Nonprofit Corporation Act (the Act). While every attempt has been made to create an accessible, clear document, it may be helpful for readers to visit this website:

http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/digest1997/CORPORATIONSANDASSOCIATIONS.htm

At this website, you will find an explanation of the Act as well as a link to the text of the Act itself

With several revisions, the Board voted to approve the Bylaws as presented by the Administrative Task Force, and to recommend them for adoption by the delegates at the 2006 ABCRM Gathering. Because of the length of the document, the text is not included within this newsletter. Hard copy is being mailed to the churches. Electronic copy is available for download at <http://www.abcrm.org/Gatheringdocuments.htm>.

Further, the Board voted the following:

If member congregations have comments or suggestions related to these proposed Bylaws, they must be submitted in writing to the Region office for consideration by the Administrative Task Force

Human Sexuality Task Force Completes Its Work

Mike Saylor, chair of the Human Sexuality Task Force, noted that in an attempt to avoid some of the pitfalls into which others have fallen while trying to discuss human sexuality as it affects our churches, the Region's Task Force was formed to give voice to each of the positions. After approaching 19 people who represented the broad spectrum of opinion with the Region, all but two agreed to serve on the Task Force.

The group spent time building relationships and hearing one another. They told personal stories about past experiences that were related to the complex issue of homosexuality. The process moved the group from the legalistic realm into a relational realm. The resulting document calls for compassion and mutual respect, qualities which tempered the three meetings of the Task Force.

The Transitional Executive Board voted to accept the Statement on Homosexuality and recommend it for adoption by the delegates at the 2006 Gathering. The full text of the document is printed on the following page of this newsletter and is also available at <http://www.abcrm.org/Gatheringdocuments.htm>.



Mike Saylor, Task Force Chair

ABCRM Statement on Homosexuality

Prologue

The Human Sexuality Task Force, meeting at the direction of the ABC of the Rocky Mountains, has struggled with the issue at hand, namely, how to deal with the matter of homosexuality in the churches. The issue was prompted by the motion on Human Sexuality presented at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the ABCRM.

In the course of its meetings, the Task Force came to recognize that dealing with homosexuality is difficult. It is colored by differences among our member churches in their approach to several matters, including:

- *hermeneutics*—having to do with the way one interprets Scripture,
- *church authority*—the degree to which individual churches are responsible to the Region or the denomination with respect to teaching and leadership,
- *association*—the matter of how affiliation with the church/Region/Body of Christ is determined.

The Task Force worked diligently to bring these issues into perspective. In the course of these discussions, it was evident that each member of the Task Force was passionate about his/her faith in Jesus Christ, and was seeking to express that faith commitment in ways that others could respect and understand. In the same way, the members repeatedly affirmed their appreciation for the Region, the denomination, and the local constituent churches

The Task Force considered several positions for presentation to the Region for approval. Our Region is a collection of churches, joined together by the associational principle, that is diverse in its theology and in the social concerns it addresses. We are aware, however, that there is a tension between congregational autonomy and the need to be united in our basic theological affirmations. For that reason, we support the ministries many churches

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have to the homosexual community and recognize that numerous biblical teachings identify homosexual behavior as being out of keeping with God's will.

The Task Force affirms that as Christians, we are believers who stand before God as

- sinners saved by grace,
- people still struggling with sin, yet,
- children of God already being transformed from glory to glory, because we are found "in Christ."

With this in mind, the following statement is presented to the Region for adoption at the 2006 Gathering:

Statement

WHEREAS, the delegates at the 2005 Gathering mandated the Transitional Executive Board to define a process to respond to the challenges of human sexuality and present a proposed resolution to be considered for adoption during the 2006 Gathering; and

WHEREAS, the Transitional Executive Board named the Human Sexuality Task Force to represent the Region's constituency in this process;

THEREFORE:

"WE AFFIRM that God intends marriage to be a monogamous, life-long, one flesh union of a woman and a man, who in response to God's call leave father and mother and cleave to one another. We affirm God's blessing and active presence in marriage relationships so entered in response to God's call."

(General Board Policy Statement, adopted June 1984)

WE ARE A BIBLICAL PEOPLE "who submit to the teaching of Scripture that God's design for sexual intimacy places it within the context of marriage between one man and one woman, and acknowledge that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with biblical teaching."

(American Baptist Identity Statement, revised November 2005)

WE AS A REGION ARE COMMITTED to the position expressed by our denomination. We take seriously the statements that have been adopted with regard to human sexuality. Further, the Region Board and staff will not knowingly employ, appoint to leadership positions, or recommend for ordination any practicing homosexual persons.

WE ENCOURAGE CHURCHES to

- examine and remain faithful to the Scriptures,
- engage in grace-motivated ministries which respond to human needs and offer God's love to all,
- practice compassion while holding to deeply held convictions,
- place in leadership positions individuals who live exemplary lives of the highest ethical responsibility in all matters, including matters of sexuality,
- remain in conversation and fellowship with those who hold differing views,
- welcome all who come, ministering to them in the name of Jesus, but not affirming any behavior contrary to scriptural teaching,
- condemn and seek to prevent all acts of hate, violence or injustice, and
- engage in ongoing discussions about this difficult and divisive issue under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

WE ENCOURAGE THE REGION BOARD AND STAFF to

- provide resources to further explore hermeneutics, church authority, and association as they relate to human sexuality in a local context,
- provide leadership and tools for discussing difficult and divisive issues, and
- provide a safe context for honest dialogue, prophetic witness, and mutual respect in dealing with this and other difficult and divisive issues.

Mary Tellis Joins ABCRM Staff



Acting on the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, the Board affirmed the hiring of Mary Tellis as the Ministry and Mission Coach for Metro Denver for one year. Her primary tasks are to determine the needs of churches in the Metro Denver area and to build relationships.

Mary says her passion is “to be in ministry one hundred percent.” Mary Tellis, the youngest child of Henry and Ruby Rhodes, is a native of Louisiana. After living in Louisiana, Texas and Ohio, her family settled in Denver, CO.

Mary completed her public education in Louisiana and also her higher education at Louisiana Tech University and Grambling State University, where she received a B.A. degree in Sociology.

Allowing God to equip her for her purpose and destiny, she furthered her studies and received a diploma of Biblical studies from Heritage Christian Center, Aurora, CO. She later pursued advanced studies and received a Master of Arts, Theology (Concentration: Ministerial Education and Evangelism); Doctor of Philosophy, Theology (Concentration: Biblical Ministerial Counseling) from Truth Bible College, Jacksonville, FL. She has authored and published a book entitled *Why? How to Maintain Integrity in the Midst of Suffering*.

Over a span of more than 21 years, she faithfully served in leadership areas as Church Administrator and Associate Pastor at Central Baptist Church and currently serves at Solomon Temple Missionary Baptist Church in Denver, pastorate of her husband, John Tellis, Jr. Mary and John are the grateful parents of three children and one lovely grand-daughter.

As she works with churches and leaders to help them identify their passion and realize their mission, she believes setting measurable objectives will make the identifying and realizing easier to accomplish. “We need to set some reachable goals so we can see that we really are moving forward,” Mary asserts.

Mary begins her work as Ministry and Mission Coach on Tuesday, September 5.



Mary Tellis (left) in conversation with Board member, Bart Torbert (Hillcrest Baptist Church/Aurora) and Wayne Dvirnak, ABCRM Staff.

Upcoming Cluster Gatherings and Training Events

Northern Front Range Cluster congregations will gather at FBC/Greeley on October 1. Publicity posters and bulletin inserts are being sent to churches and are available for download at <http://www.abcrm.org/NorthernFrontRange.htm>.

American Baptists in the **Wyoming Cluster** plan to gather at Camp WYOBA on September 15-16 where they will worship, recreate, and work together as they strengthen the ministry and mission of the Cluster.

The Ministry and Mission Coaches are planning to hold “**Healthy Congregations**” training events throughout the Region during 2007. The “Healthy Congregations” workshops are offered in partnership with the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. Watch for detailed information.

Your coaches are available to work with your congregation and to hear your concerns. Contact them by calling

- **Wayne Dvirnak**,
Wyoming Cluster
Northern Front Range Cluster
(307) 638-8247.
- **Mike Oldham**
Western Slope Cluster
Southeast CO/NM Cluster
(719) 460-1830.
- **Mary Tellis**
Metro Denver Cluster
beginning September 5
(303) 988-3900.

"Got Water?"



2006 ABCRM Gathering October 20-21

Hosted by New Hope Baptist Church
of Denver
3701 Colorado Blvd.

Meetings held at church and
Radisson Hotel - Denver Stapleton Plaza
3333 Quebec Street

2006 ABCRM Gathering: Are You Ready Yet?

As Larry VanSpriell, chair of the Gathering Planning Committee, reviewed the Committee's process in his report to the Board, he noted that 15 people worked together during seven planning sessions to put together this year's annual event to be held October 20-21. Sub-groups were given the specific tasks of worship, keynote speaker, youth, Discovery Sessions, pre-Gathering clergy/spouse event, venue, and logistical support.

Larry says, "As one of the great preachers and visionaries, J. Alfred Smith will bring us inspiration, energy, and insight during our worship experiences." Smith will also lead the pre-Gathering clergy/spouse event, "Fire in My Bones: The Power, Purpose, and Passion of Preaching" on October 19-20.

Everything you need to know in order to get ready and register for the Gathering is on the ABCRM website at http://www.abcrm.org/annual_gathering.htm. Remember, preparation includes the review of the Bylaws and sending your comments to the Region office, postmarked by September 30, 2006. Business sessions will be held on Friday, October 20.

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Region Finances At a Glance

2005 Audit

Ken Roth of Taylor, Roth and Company, PLLC spoke to the Board about the completed audit of the Region's 2005 finances. Taylor, Roth and Company, PLLC works exclusively with nonprofit organizations. They conducted their audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the U.S. These standards require that they plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentations.

It is the opinion of Taylor, Roth and Company that the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains as of December 31, 2005. The Board received the auditor's report.

2006 Financial Statements

Accountant Janet Streich presented the 2006 financials. The Board voted to receive her report.

2007 Budget Proposal

The 2007 budget was reviewed by the Board. Since projected receipts for United Mission are decreasing, a Region offering is being proposed for 2007. It was also noted that next year's budget reflects an increase in projected expenditures for communication and website development. The Board voted to approve the balanced budget and recommend it to the delegates at the 2006 ABCRM Gathering. The budget will be included with other documents mailed directly to your church or it may be downloaded at http://www.abcrm.org/annual_gathering.htm.



Rhonda Magee, Acting Treasurer

Upon the resignation of Bob Blake, Rhonda Magee now serves as the Acting Treasurer. Rhonda has a financial background in accounting. She lives in Denver where she attends Calvary Baptist Church.

Current Investment Report

You may view the current investment report on the Region's website. Go to http://www.abcrm.org/communication/regional_financial.htm

Ministry Updates

ABW Ministries/Colorado

Jackie Arnold, President

After a successful annual conference held in Fort Collins during June, the ABW Ministries of Colorado announces these 2007 events:

- Women's Ministries Winter Retreat, January 19-21 at Silven Dale Ranch in Loveland, CO. Jan DeWitt will be the speaker.
- 70th Annual Conference in Alamosa, CO on June 8-10. Joyce Camp will speak.

ABW Ministries/Wyoming

Barbara Vinzant, President

The 2007 Wyoming ABW Ministries Conference will be held again in Lander on June 8-9. Linda Roller and Bonnie Wilhelm of FBC/Lander will continue to serve as conference coordinators. This year 50 women from nine churches attended the conference.

The women voted to provide additional funds to their scholarship recipients, Amanda Halliburton and Helen Schindler.

Front Range Camping

*Mike Oldham,
Ministry and Mission Coach*

Eight-nine campers from Front Range churches attended camp at Quaker Ridge Camp and Conference Center in Woodland Park, CO. Elementary, Middle School, and Senior camps were held simultaneously. Informal evaluations revealed the campers' desire to return to Quaker Ridge if possible.

Camp WYOBA

*Deanna Dyer, WYOBA Board
Chair*

Four weeks of American Baptist camps were held for children and youth at Camp WYOBA on Casper Mountain in Wyoming. The recent fire on the mountain did not harm the camp facilities. The WYOBA Board continues to work toward the goal of transferring financial operation to local management.

Gulf Mission Project

*Mike Oldham,
Ministry and Mission Coach*

Twenty-three people participated in this "growing edge" project. Six churches were represented: FBC/Jackson, WY; FBC/Flagler, CO; Emmanuel Missionary, FBC, and Highland Park, all of Colorado Springs, CO; and Calvary Baptist/Denver. To learn more about the work of the Gulf Mission Team, visit <http://www.abcrm.org/GulfMissionProject.htm>.

Department of Missions

Kevin Lowe, Chair

The Department of Missions helps arrange for missionaries to visit local churches.

- Ruth Fox visited churches in Colorado Springs and Denver in August.
- Rick Gutierrez will be in Wyoming churches from September 30 to October 9.
- In October Glen Chapman will visit Western Slope churches and participate in the 2006 ABCRM Gathering.

Department of Ministry

Nancy Darnell, Chair

The Department of Ministry will offer a second educational opportunity, titled "Pastoral Care in Context" during the weekend of September 22-24. Jan McCormack and Gary Bowser will co-teach this class.

The Department's first class this year was Slayden Yarbrough's course in AB Polity and History. Seven students completed the class; two are in process.

The Department is currently working with 19 candidates seeking ordination or Region recognition. In addition, simplification of the procedures manual is nearing completion.

Congregational Leadership

*Mike Oldham and
Wayne Dvirnak,
Ministry and Mission Coaches*

The following congregations have recently called a pastor:

- FBC/Casper, WY
John Marshall
- FBC/Greeley, CO
Paul Brigham
- FBC/Molina, CO
Kyle VanArsdol
- FBC/Rock Springs, WY
Lori Dvirnak Lundblad
- FBC/Torrington, WY
Rick Cedarholm

The Board voted to accept the withdrawal request from First Baptist Church in Holly, CO.

Please pray for the churches searching for pastoral leadership.

God Puts Us Back Together Again

After a reflective time of worship led by James Peters on Saturday morning, during which he anchored his thoughts in the book of Job, the Board took time to review the ways God is working to restore and put ABCRM back together again.

How do we express our thanks to God for restoration within our Region? Just count the ways!

“God is making us into a people of healing who have a wider influence.”

“God has helped us put our house in order.”

“We are working together as a team.”

“There is trust among us.”

“God gives us hope.”

“There’s a new kind of tension among us. It’s an exciting kind of tension that comes with ‘pressing on.’”

“We’re on the road to healing. We need to receive it and step out in faith.

God is with us and will restore us. We as leaders need to believe God will truly do that.”

“We acknowledge that we need restoration and have entered into the spiritual process.”

“We are beginning to cease our focus on our own issues and are beginning to focus on others through prayer.”

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