



May 31, 2007

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

We Welcome Our Interim Executive Minister



The Region Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Larry VanSpriell to be the Interim Executive Minister for the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains. Larry has a substantial history in our Region having served most recently as the intentional interim pastor of First Baptist Church in Greeley, CO, and as the chair of the ABCRM Gathering for the last two years. In addition, he has served in the capacity of chaplain to the Region staff.

The attributes that most caught the attention of the Executive Committee during their interview with him were his understanding of the Region and his investment in it. He also has a strong track record of listening before leading, and as a

result has been well respected by previous staff persons whom he has supervised. His compassionate pastor's heart will be highly valued by everyone in the Region.

As the interim executive minister, his term of service will be relatively short. The search for a permanent executive has already begun—a process that can take from a year to 18 months. It seemed important that we have a person who is forward thinking and can operate on the fast track to keep our Region moving in the positive directions in which we have already embarked. He has been described as the type of person who knows how to build on the legacy of previous leadership and prepare the organization for its new leadership. People who know him well also affirm that he holds trust as a primary value which he is committed to uphold and build upon.

Larry was out of town this month, so he was notified by e-mail of the Board's action. His response demonstrated the enthusiasm we expect that he will bring to this position when he said, "I am so very pleased! I am deeply grateful to God...for this opportunity to serve our Region. Please know that I am eager to get started." He then

volunteered to begin his work after only one day of rest from traveling for nearly two weeks.

The Executive Committee found that fresh enthusiasm to be contagious during the interview. Coupling that enthusiasm with a sincere desire to make the services of the Region both functional and relevant to churches and pastors resulted in the Region Board's casting its unanimous approval for Larry VanSpriell to be our Interim Executive Minister.

Larry is married to Tamera ("Tam"). They have three sons: Jeffrey and his wife, Tianna, live near Ocean City, MD and have two children, Elsa (4) and Lucas (2); Bradley and his wife, Amy, live in St. Paul, MN with their children, Sam (5) and Henry (3). Their youngest son, Jon, is single, managing a business in Boulder and studying at the CU-Denver School of Music. The VanSpriells are members of First Baptist Church of Boulder and reside in Superior, CO.

Please join us in welcoming Larry to this position. And let him know what you are willing to do to help nurture a healthy environment here in the Rocky Mountain Region.

Rich Schweissing, ABCRM President

ABCUSA Promotes Medicare Prescription Drug Costs Program

In a creative new partnership, faith-based organizations and the Social Security Administration are teaming up to promote a program that provides assistance with Medicare prescription drug costs. This program, "Extra Help," can pay a portion of monthly premiums, along with annual deductibles and prescription co-payments.

"The high cost of medicine can be a burden on people who have limited income and resources," says Michael J. Astrue, commissioner of Social Security. Sharing information about "Extra Help" can assist a loved one in addressing these costs. The extra help could be worth more than \$3,000 per year. To qualify for the extra help, the person must be receiving Medicare and have limited income.

"The relationship between poverty and poor health are current realities in our nation. It is imperative that the church serve as an advocate and a voice for those in need," says Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, Executive Director of National Ministries. "As a community of faith, American Baptists are challenged to promote the welfare of all through public service."

Spread the word with family, friends, and church members about this program, which promises help with the burden of prescription drug costs. For more information and eligibility requirements, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/10163.htm.

National Ministries is committed to transforming leadership and lives through ministries of prophetic justice and social advocacy. Visit www.nationalministries.org.



What in the World Are We Doing Here?

"SoulJourners" is the very appropriate new name for the "ABCRM Senior Adult Conferences" which were held at Black Forest each fall for many years. "Young 55+ seniors" are encouraged to participate with the more seasoned journeyers in this great annual event! We are writing this article to let all seniors know how meaningful the past conferences/retreats have been to us personally and what great expectations we have for the 2007 Retreat to be held September 25-27 at the Franciscan Retreat Center in Colorado Springs.

We have found these senior gatherings to be times of wonderful fellowship among mature friends who share common interests and the desire to keep their minds and hearts active. The program always includes excellent denominational and missionary speakers who bring us direct news of ABCUSA and mission field happenings. Their presentations are always very insightful and full of inspiration and information. We leave each retreat feeling renewed and ready to carry out the things we have learned.

This year's retreat will continue this high quality programming and fellowship, and we urge you to attend. Our General Secretary of ABCUSA, Roy Medley, is a most inspiring speaker, and we are fortunate that he can be with us. You will find him not only very inspiring but also very personable. Deborah Van Broekhoven is a friend of ours and is lots of fun to be with. She is a very knowledgeable speaker who calls our attention to history's impact on why we're where we are today and how our future may be affected. She does an excellent job directing the American Baptist Historical Society.

Registration forms and information have been sent to each church. You can save \$25 by registering before July 20th. If you have questions, contact Ken Pinkham, Registrar, at 303- 470-1306 or kenpinkham@gmail.com. Or go to <http://www.abcrm.org/ministries/seniors.htm>

Have you ever wondered, "What in the World Are We Doing Here?"
Come to the 2007 SoulJourners Retreat and find out!
We seniors still have roles to fulfill.

*Bill and Betty Moseley
Members of American Baptist Church, Fort Collins, CO*

First Baptist Church of Denver Hosts Three Churches



First Baptist Church of Denver is abuzz with activity these days as two churches and a contemporary worship

ministry are now using the church for their services. So we thought we'd introduce you to our new friends and tell you a little bit about what brought them to First Baptist.

Church of the Master

Church of the Master moved into FBC in May. The long-time American Baptist church has sold its church building at 5152 East 17th Avenue, and is holding services at 11:00 a.m. Sundays in the Fireside Room at FBC. The first week in June, they will move their services to 10:00 a.m. for the summer. They also plan to combine their service with FBC's for communion the first Sunday of every month.

Declining membership, lack of growth, and little neighborhood support forced the church to sell its property, according to Interim Minister Slayden Yarbrough, who says the church's official membership now totals about 40. The building is being sold to an Ethiopian Orthodox church.

By moving to FBC, one might say Church of the Master is coming full circle. In 1891, the Capitol Hill Baptist Mission branched off from First Baptist Church of Denver, and in 1913 united with Eleventh Avenue churches to become City Park Baptist Church, which constructed the building on 17th Avenue in 1949. Twenty years later, it merged with Montclair Baptist Church and became Church of the Master, which is now completing the circle by coming back to FBC/Denver.

COTM will maintain an office upstairs at FBC, and Pastor Yarbrough will have an

office next to Pastor Bowser's office. COTM can be reached by calling FBC at 303-861-2501.

The Threshold

In February, Brad Berglund and Ashley Seamon brought their innovative contemporary ministry to FBC, where they meet at 5:30 p.m., the third Sunday of every month.

They call their worship service *The Threshold: A Place for Transformation and Hope*. Inspired by Taizé-style worship founded in France, which includes meditative and sung prayers, the ministry is aimed at those who are looking for a more intense, personal, participatory worship experience in a close community of like-minded individuals. Unlike traditional church services where the pastor preaches to the congregation, in this type of worship everyone participates and is involved equally.

Berglund is an ordained American Baptist minister involved in ecumenical ministries focused on worship renewal and pilgrimage, serving a variety of denominations worldwide. He has brought Taizé-style worship to several Metro area churches.

Seamon is Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church. She preaches at North Presbyterian Church in Denver, teaches yoga, offers spiritual direction, and has organized a community spirituality project in Northwest Denver. She also has served on several Presbyterian Church committees.

The Upper Room United Pentecostal Church

The Upper Room brought its Sunday and Wednesday services to FBC in March after being forced out of its previous location. It holds services at 1:00 p.m., Sunday and at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday in the sanctuary.

Derwood Tate founded the Upper Room in 1988 when he was 25 years old and attending another church. "I felt a need for it and prayed about it," he recalls, explaining what drove him to start his own church at such a young age. "I felt very strongly that God was leading me in that direction."

It was a belief that was ultimately confirmed, he says, noting that the church today boasts 130 members, an assistant minister, Isaac Veltkamp, and a Spanish-speaking minister, Ishmael Canas.

The Upper Room had been renting an old gym on Logan Street owned by the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, which they'd fixed up and made their religious home. But after 10 years, the city informed Tate that because the use of the building had changed from its original purpose, the law required that it be brought up to code. That endeavor would have cost the church thousands of dollars, Tate says, more than they felt they could afford for a building they didn't own.

But a growing church with more than a hundred members needs a place to worship. "If you don't have a building," Tate says, "you sure can feel it."

So Tate and his church members were delighted to find FBC. "We love this building," he says of First Baptist's historic structure. And while someday the church may be in a position to purchase its own building, Tate says, for now, he and his members are more than happy to be at First Baptist.

*Linda Black
Office Manager
First Baptist Church
Denver, CO*

*This article was first published in the
May 2007 issue of the Spire.*

Learning Peace

... inside me
 ... between us
 ... for everyone
 ... for our planet



A central element of the spirituality of Anabaptist Christians has been the understanding that living at peace in the world is a necessity if we are to live in connection with God. We believe creeds, ideologies, and politics ultimately build walls between people rather than bridges. Rather, God's will for all of creation is to live in a wholesome unity that celebrates diversity and life rather than enforces conformity and obedience.

Jesus' ethic of love suggests that the only way to "win" peace is through forgiveness and willingly taking on the identification of "servant" to friends and enemies alike. This ethic combines the seeming conflicting qualities of self-assertion and sympathy. It's the approach that fearlessly asserts one's rights as a human being and at the same time, proclaims that these rights belong to every other human being.

Peacemaking is first and foremost an attitude and way of "being" rather than a set of techniques. The primary task of those who wish to be peacemakers is to be willing to grow in one's ability to encounter friends, family, work, school, and self in ways that build rather than sever connections. Our world will only be transformed to the extent that we participate in our own transformation.

Mike Burr, Pastor
 Koinonia Church
 Grand Junction, CO
<http://www.koinoniagj.org>

Children's Peace Project

Beginning with an idea proposed at a visioning meeting in March at Grand Junction's Koinonia Church, a group of folks are creating a Children's Peace Project. The purpose of the program is to spread world peace, beginning with children.

The project has been met with a lot of enthusiasm from people in the Koinonia community. During April, details began to take shape at a series of brainstorming sessions. The plan is to generate activities that will include creativity, music, food, learning opportunities, and connections with children of other countries. Mediation, tolerance, non-violent methods of change, great peacemakers, and how to have inner peace are some of the topics to be explored.

The Children's Peace Project will launch with a one-day pilot. The Koinonia community will host an intergenerational Family Peace Festival on Saturday, June 23. The overall purpose is to illustrate ways to create peace within one's self, for all people, and for the planet. The festival will begin with an opening ceremony at 9:30 a.m. and end with a potluck picnic at 12:30 p.m. Each child in attendance can take home a free T-shirt painted during the festival.

Linda Stout, coordinator of the Children's Peace Project, noted that the event is designed for families to participate together and will include a variety of creative arts, food, music, and experiential activities. There will be no charge for the event, although donations to help defray the costs will be accepted.

Inspiration for the Festival comes from figures such as Mahatma Gandhi who said, "If we are to reach real peace in the world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children." Pastor Mike Burr also highlighted the strong influence of Martin Luther King. In referring to King he noted, "It's still true that the old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. We believe, as did King, that peace is not only the goal; it is also the means by which we arrive at the goal."

The festival is the "brainchild" of Ms. Stout who has had a life-long interest in activities that generate peace. It's her hope that the festival will be the first of many events that teach the attitudes and principles of living peacefully in a "non-religious," practical, and inclusive manner.

Meanwhile Mike Burr is hosting discussion in the adult Sunday church school class about some of the foundational issues to be considered as the church takes with this project. There will be additional adult learning opportunities in the coming months as they familiarize themselves with the processes and techniques to be taught to the children.

If you decide to attend this event, please let the church know you're coming. Call and leave a message at 970-242-3947. And bring a dish to share at the picnic. Beverages will be supplied by the church. Koinonia is located at the southeast corner of 25 Road and G Road in Grand Junction.



Article compiled
 from publicity materials
 supplied by Koinonia Church

Regional Mission Team Holds Initial Meeting



On May 20, the Regional Mission Team held its first meeting in Loveland. The team leader, John Turnage (First Baptist Church/Loveland) convened the group. Others participating in this initial meeting were Kevin Lowe (Harvey Park Baptist Church/Denver), Rich Schweissing (Crossroad American Baptist Church /Northglenn), and Kerry Hassler (First Baptist Church/Boulder). Additional members have been asked to serve with this group and will do so at a later date.

The participants talked about the purposes of the team which include the following:

- to create general enthusiasm within the ABCRM for supporting IM-ABC missionaries, especially our Region-focused missionaries including Dan and Estella Schweissing in the Bahamas, Tom and Terry Myers in Bulgaria, John and Debra Coats in Cambodia, and others. (See list of Special Interest Missionaries, http://www.abcrm.org/mission/missionaries_special.htm .)
- to generate both ABCRM and individual church funding for Region-wide international and U.S. short-term mission trip opportunities, based on work-project requests originated by the missionaries.
- to coordinate the marketing, scheduling, work-project materials, logistics, flights, in-country travel/food/accommodations for the short-term mission trip opportunities.
- to use existing missionary contacts and previous mission trip leadership experience of those on the team to put together at least three short-term mission trip opportunities to present to Region constituents at the upcoming 2007 ABCRM Gathering in Grand Junction. The timeframe for these trips will be in early 2008 (possibly from January through April).
- to seek regional funding to assist with mission trip expenses.

Members of the team volunteered to look for short-term mission-trip requests involving ABC missionaries in the following areas:

- John: Chile and possibly other countries in South America and Mexico.
- Kevin: India, Cambodia, and Bacone College in Oklahoma.
- Rich: The Bahamas and maybe other areas in the Caribbean and Central America.
- Kerry: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Thailand, Japan.

The Regional Mission Team (or Mission Committee) was created in the fall of 2006 when the current Bylaws were adopted. Article V—Region Board, Section F calls for the appointment of members of Standing Committees. A Mission Committee was determined to be a Standing Committee by vote of the 2006 delegates.

*Article compiled from meeting notes
supplied by Kerry Hassler*

Church World Service Aids Flood Victims

Long-term recovery is beginning to take shape in Eagle Pass, TX., the scene of a deadly tornado on April 24. Church World Service Disaster Response and Recovery Liaison Heriberto Martinez reports two long-term recovery groups have formed. Church World Service has provided 200 CWS Blankets and 225 Health Kits to La Trinidad United Methodist Church for tornado-related needs in Texas.

Severe flooding in recent weeks has impacted parts of New Jersey and New York. Church World Service Disaster Response Liaison Joann Hale is helping to advise FEMA and community members in Westchester County, New York, on building the community's long-term recovery efforts.

In New Jersey, the New Jersey Interfaith Partnership in Disaster, formed in part by Church World Service following the 2001 terrorist attacks, is helping to coordinate long-term recovery following severe flooding there. Church World Service has provided 270 CWS Blankets, 105 School Kits, 100 Health Kits, 94 Emergency Cleanup Buckets, and 104 Kid's Kits for needs in New Jersey.

Severe flooding that affected parts of Kansas and Missouri is waning. Assessments of need for Church World Service support are underway. Church World Service is providing 45 CWS Emergency Clean-up Buckets to First Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church of Savannah, for flood-related needs in Missouri.

To learn how you can help, visit <http://www.churchworldservice.org/>



Attend the 2007 Biennial/Centennial, June 29-July 2.
Relect on God's word.
Interact with missionaries and denominational leaders.
Share the joy.
Experience the power of prayer and song with thousands of people in worship together.

Affirm God's work in your life.
Nurture old friendships and make new ones.
Discover creative ministries in pre-Biennial events.

Sense God's presence.
Hear dynamic speakers.
Immerse yourself in Baptist History.
Navigate our nation's Capital.
Engage in stimulating Bible study.

For more information about the 2007 biennial, visit <http://www.abc-usa.org>

Leave refreshed and ready to Arise and Shine!

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist is published by the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains www.abcrm.org

Larry VanSpriell:
 Interim Executive Minister
lvanspriell@abcrm.org

Ingrid Dvirnak:
 Newsletter Editor
idvirnak@abcrm.org

Publication dates are the 15th and 30th/31st of each month.

Deadlines for submissions are the 10th and 25th of each month.

Reprint permission is granted to ABCRM churches.

Discover your PASSION!

Realize your MISSION!