

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

The View from Here: “Matthew’s Nativity: The Joy and Pain of Childbirth”

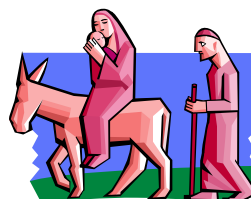


Facts of the season: great expectations of joy are attached to this season as are expectations of pain.

It is not a fairy tale. Some would call it the birth of “the most wanted child in the world;” some detractors refer to it as the birth of “the most dangerous child in the world”; many would call it the birth of “the most needed child in the world.” If anybody is looking for a reason for God to be involved in the world—if anybody needs a rationale for God to have Christ entering into flesh and dwelling among us—all one needs to do is read the Gospel of Matthew.

The joy of the birth, with angelic hosts, wise witnesses and the star showing the way is the event we remember most about Bethlehem. But after the birth we are told that Bethlehem hosted another event that the Chamber of Commerce is not proud of. King Herod’s soldiers came to that region and killed every male baby 2 years old and under, in what is known as the “massacre of the innocents.” The joy and the pain of childbirth: what a world to bring a child into.

Only Matthew records in his Christmas account the “massacre of the innocents” and the escape of Joseph, Mary and Jesus into Egypt. Matthew chronicles a world that we are all too familiar with.



The Christmas story is an important story for us precisely because it is the story of the arrival of a Savior into a world of joy and pain. The Christmas story and the Jesus story are about a world where wonderful and terrible things happen.

A wonderful theologian and biblical scholar, and a genuinely nice man, Walter Brueggeman, expresses his gratitude to Matthew for including the “massacre of the innocents” in his story of the birth. Dr. Brueggeman has close friends who have lost a son to cancer this past year, and he says, “*It helps me, and I hope it helps them to remember that theirs are not the first tears to fall on Christmas.*” It is quite possible that we’ve all had a Christmas when tears have fallen from our eyes. Dr. Brueggeman goes on to say, “*There has never been a Christmas of pure peace and happiness, including the first Christmas. Joy to the World has always been sung to the accompaniment of much pain in the world.*”

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The View

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So it is a world of joy and pain—in the same space, in the same place. We need not pretend that Christmas is supposed to be something that it is not. It is a love story. Like all love stories, there is some pain with it.

In a powerful story from a documentary movie, *As If It Were Yesterday*, about the Belgian Christians who sheltered 4,000 Jewish children during WWII, to save them from Nazi death camps. The film tells of a 6-year-old Jewish boy who was placed with a Christian family. After a time they said they could no longer keep the boy. They said, “He’s a thief.”

Those making the placements of the children were distressed and one went to visit the family. The placement worker asked, “How can a 6-year-old be a thief? That’s impossible.”

“Yes, he’s a thief,” the mother said. “Our little girl got a manger for Christmas, with the little Jesus and the rest. He stole the little Jesus. Our daughter is very upset. She won’t eat and is tearful all the time.”

So the placement worker took the little Jewish boy aside. “Listen, you know that the Nazis want to kill us all and here you are with good people trying to save you. Why did you steal?” “Sir, I didn’t steal.” The boy said. The worker replied “You had better tell me the truth. Nothing will happen to you.”

“I have taken Jesus to hide him,” the boy said truthfully. “What do you mean?” the worker asked.

“I know little Jesus is a Jew. The Germans could take him. So I hid him to save him.”



Wonderful things and terrible things happen in this world. Joy and pain can happen in the same person, in the same home, in the same town. It happened in Bethlehem. It can happen in your town and my town.

Hear the words of John McCain reflecting on one of his experiences as a prisoner of war in Vietnam in his book *Faith of My Fathers: A Family Memoir*. Sometimes pain and joy exist simultaneously in the same space:

“When I was being mistreated by the North Vietnamese, many times I found myself asking to live just one more minute rather than one more hour or one more day. And I knew I was able to hang on because of the spiritual help that I received through prayer.

At Christmas time I was appointed the room chaplain, not because of my excessive virtue, but because I knew all the prayers that went with a church service, since I was in boarding school and an Episcopalian. We asked for a Bible, and the Vietnamese said they didn’t have any. Later we learned that thousands of Bibles had been sent to us.

Four days before Christmas, I was told that I could copy prayers and stories from the only Bible the Vietnamese had available. Our service consisted of a Bible passage read by me, followed by an appropriate song by the choir (the other guys in the room). I talked about the birth of Christ, and the choir sang “Silent Night.” I looked around the room and there were tears in those men’s eyes. They weren’t tears of anger or fright or sorrow or bitterness or even longing for home. They were tears of joy that for the first time in seven years for some of them, here was a celebration of Christmas together as family.”

There are tender places in a tough world that give us a momentary glimpse of the God who loves us so:



- One of those tender places is the birth scene in Bethlehem—the very same place that would soon host a massacre.
- Belgian families hiding Jewish children and a 6-yr-old Jewish boy hiding a figure of baby Jesus are tender places.
- A Christmas service in a POW camp was one of those tender places.
- All who encountered Jesus on every step of his journey found a tender place in a tough world.

O Lord, may we be tender persons offering a tender place for those who are experiencing a tough world during this sacred season. O Lord, transform us into the hands and feet and heart of Christ! Amen.

*Submitted by
Larry VanSpriell
ABCRM
Interim Executive Minister*



Curtis Park Community Center: Open and Serving the Community

American Baptist-related Curtis Park Community Center, a mainstay of ministry for countless thousands in Denver, CO, for nearly 70 years, remains open, committed to serving its community and debunking recent inaccurate information that it had closed.



persons, and Curtis Park served lunch to more than 600 senior citizens. A licensed professional counselor donates time one day per week at the center.

“Our Christmas efforts are being enhanced by the arrival of boxes from White Cross,” Butler says. “This will ensure that as many families as possible will be assisted. Additionally, Leadership Denver Class of ’07, a leadership development program of the Greater Denver Chamber of Commerce Foundation, is volunteering to wrap Christmas gifts to aid us.”

Begun as a Christian center by American Baptist Churches USA in 1938, Curtis Park continues to offer essential ministries to those in need within metropolitan Denver. It is part of the Neighborhood Action Program, a National Ministries-supported network of community, Christian and neighborhood centers throughout the United States that serve individuals and families facing economic, employment and other challenges.

In addition to numerous on-site ministries, the center’s New Life Youth Media Team helped to produce video and digital accounts of the denomination’s NEW LIFE 2010 emphasis, including significant work at the 2001 Biennial Meeting of American Baptist Churches USA in Providence, RI.

Currently under the direction of its board of directors and an outside consultant, Curtis Park Community Center is in the process of reorganization. Its original programs “continue to provide the much needed services of the community as defined by the guidelines of the ABC Neighborhood Action Program,” says board member Gin Butler. Despite limited staff and funds, Butler notes that through mid-November, the center provided food to more than 12,500 individuals and clothing to more than 5,000 individuals. In addition, the victim assistance program ministered to close to 150

Whatever the focus of its reorganization, Curtis Park Community Center will continue to provide ongoing essential services. “Even with new ministries and direction, the current funded ministries will continue,” Butler says. “All of the services being provided are staffed by individuals funded by already budgeted dollars.”

Contributions to support the ongoing mission and ministry of Curtis Park Community Center are welcome and encouraged. Churches and individuals are invited to send gifts directly to Curtis Park at 929 29th Street, Denver, CO 80205.

Neighborhood Action Program centers such as Curtis Park are one way National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA, carries out the home mission of The American Baptist Home Mission Societies, ministering throughout the United States and Puerto Rico to transform leaders and transform lives through evangelism, church planting, and social justice programs, and many more.

American Baptist News Service

[What's in this RMAB?](#)

Your Vote is Needed!

Curtis Park Community Center in Denver has been chosen by HGTV as one of thirty possible projects to revitalize and renovate. There is one catch though...

You have to vote for Curtis Park!

For 69 years, the Curtis Park Community Center has been providing neighborhood services that promote independence for seniors, the homeless and low-income individuals. Last year, the center served 7,500 people and is aiming to reach their goal of 9,500 by next year. It is comprised of two buildings – one is a former church, now used as administrative offices and a food/clothing bank; the other serves as a recreation center with a gym and classrooms used for before and after school programs. The community center was closed for a number of years due to repair issues and asbestos contamination, but reopened in Fall 2007 following the removal of the asbestos. Their funds, however, will only cover removal of the asbestos and minor security repairs on the property. Now it’s up to HGTV and its partners to make renovations that will help support new community programs and neighborhood revitalization.

Voting is open until December 21, 2007. Encourage your congregation to vote every day until the deadline. Curtis Park needs all the help it can get. Let us see if ABCRM can get Curtis Park on national television and the help it needs!

Click the link below to vote!

http://www.hgtv.com/hgtv/ah_change_the_world/text/0,,HGTV_30676_65470,00.html

ABCRM Staff Helped Out At Curtis Park's Santa Shop

The ABCRM Staff volunteered at Curtis Park's Santa Shop on Dec. 5. They organized donations, packed and wrapped presents, and helped hand out those presents to needy families. They appreciated the opportunity to help those people that are in need.



RMAB 12/15/07

Live Your Mission 2008

ABCRM Youth Retreat



Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it SNOW!!!

We are still hoping for snow for Christmas. We are also hoping that we have lots of snow for the first ABCRM Winter Youth Retreat in years.

This Winter Retreat for youth will be held at Camp Id-Ra-Ha-Je in Bailey, CO. Camp Id-Ra-Ha-Je is located about 26 miles south of C-470 just off of Highway 285. (Can you guess what "Camp Id-Ra-Ha-Je stands for?")

We will meet on Friday, February 15 at 6:00 p.m. at the Green Meadow Lodge at the camp. At 6:30 we will have a light dinner, and then at 7:15 p.m. we will gather for a time of worship in the chapel.

We will be staying in dormitories at the Green Mountain Lodge. **Everyone should bring a pillow and sleeping bag and any toiletries they will need.**

The theme for the retreat is *Live Your Mission*. The Rev. Reggie Fletcher will be the featured speaker. He will challenge the youth to consider ways to live out the great commandment to love God with all their hearts and love their neighbors as they love themselves. Reggie currently serves as the National Youth and Young Adult Ministries Coordinator for ABC-USA.



This is not a "drop off" event. **Each church that sends youth must provide adult sponsors.** We need one adult sponsor for every eight youth. If you just have a couple youth interested in attending, you might be able to team up with a neighboring church to provide adult leadership.

Join us for a great weekend of fun, building friendships and spiritual growth.

Registration forms should be available through your church office or youth leader or at www.abcrm.org.

*Submitted by
Mike Oldham
Ministry and Mission Coach
SE Colorado, New Mexico,
& the Western Slope*

[What's in this RMAB?](#)

ABCRM is Home for Burmese Couple

Eric and Jennifer Wynn are extraordinary people. Their prodigious qualities were born, not of good fortune, but misfortune; not of fate, but faith. One day while eating in his favorite Burmese



restaurant in Los Angeles, Eric and the restaurant owner were discussing the dilemma of a young Burmese girl named Jennifer, who had come to the United States on a fiancé visa, but upon her arrival the promised groom refused to marry her. If she didn't get married she would have to return to the oppressive political conditions of Myanmar, (Burma's name since 1989).

Eric was instantly empathetic to the girl's situation. Twenty years earlier he was a student at Rangoon University, Yangon, when his country's newly ensconced military government under General Ne Win outlawed public protests. The General ordered the dynamiting of the university's Student Union building bringing about the deaths of more than 200 students. Eric fled Burma soon after. A similar crack down and ensuing deaths began in September 2007 as Myanmar's military fired on pro-democracy Buddhist monks outside the nation's largest pagoda in Yangon.

Asking to meet the young lady, Eric experienced love at first sight. "I will marry you," he said. "Okay, sure," she replied. They were married two months later. Eric came from Mandalay in central Burma. Jennifer's roots are in the Kachin territory in the far north. Her ancestors were converts of Adoniram and Anna Judson, the first American Baptist missionaries. Within two years the Wynns came to Grand Junction and became involved in the First Baptist Church.

Jennifer and Eric returned to Myanmar in 1995 on the occasion of her father's

death. After his funeral, Jennifer extended her stay to take care of family matters. When the couple decided to return to Grand Junction, Jennifer discovered that her passport had ex-

pired. Eric returned to this country alone. For eight years they were separated by half a world. The Myanmar government wouldn't reinstate Jennifer's passport until the United States had approved her re-entry. The United States wouldn't approve her re-entry until Eric could prove he was an established citizen. In addition, they needed a sponsor to assure the U.S. government that he and Jennifer could meet their financial needs. The First Baptist Church readily agreed to be their sponsor.

After much work, research, diplomatic positioning, and no small amount of effort on the part of Congressman Scott McInnis and Grand Junction attorney Carl Burley, Jennifer and Eric were reunited in early spring of 2003. Since then the Wynns have been most active and faithful members of the First Baptist Church. They prepare and serve a multiple course meal for the congregation every Wednesday night before Bible study. The entrees are different every week. Jennifer sings in the choir and is a member of the hand bell team. Eric assists in the ministry of the American Baptist Men.

In September 2007, Jennifer successfully completed a newly designed course for naturalization (actually, she "aced" it) and was sworn in as an American citizen. It is a delight to work, worship and fellowship with this extraordinary couple.

*Submitted by
Jerry Springston
Pastor, First Baptist Church
Grand Junction*

The Beginning Experience Holds Seminar for Those "Single Again"

Are you "single again" from the death of a spouse, separation or divorce? Beginning Experience of Wyoming is a non-profit, non-denominational program that offers support and direction in resolving the grief accompanying the end of a relationship. It is designed to help you make a new beginning in life. The next Beginning Experience weekend will be in Casper and starts at 8:00 p.m. on Friday evening January 18, 2008, and runs through Sunday afternoon January 20, 2008. Registration deadline is January 16, 2008.

For more information call LaVerne at (307) 237-7333, Marilyn at (307) 856-2001, Jim at (307) 856-6479, Rick at (307) 265.3201, or Rosanne at (307) 856.5700.

*Submitted by
Marilyn M. Komrs
Wyoming BE Team*

Stop Receiving Unsolicited Credit Card Offers

Call the credit reporting agencies' "Opt Out Line" to get off mailing lists for unsolicited credit card offers at 1-888-567-8688 or go to www.optoutprescreen.com

Opt out of e-mail and direct mail by contacting the Direct Marketing Association at www.dmaconsumers.org/consumerassistance.html for a \$1 fee.

*Source
Jefferson County DA
Scott Storey*

A Rising Star in ABCRM

Rev. Jules Smith of Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church presides over the largest congregation of any African American pastor in Colorado. The August dedication of the church's new facilities, including a beautiful and expansive sanctuary with seating on two levels reveals a Rising Star congregation that numbers more than 2,000. The new place of worship at 1500 S. Dayton Street in Denver was the third phase of a \$10.2 million campus expansion planned and brought to fruition over the past decade. The new facilities include a two-court gymnasium and a 50-seat choir room.

When Rev. Smith took over as pastor in 1986, following the death of the former pastor, Rev. George Brinkley, Rising Star had 33 parishioners on the rolls. "Out of that 33, 17 came to church with regularity," Rev. Smith



said. "I never will forget one Sunday I was feeling dejected and disappointed. While in preparation for the message that Sunday, God whispered to me that he wanted me to preach and he was going to send workers into the vineyard. From that Sunday on I started preaching and God began the increase. I had a vision of expanding. God had shown me that we would be expanding."

"A plan developed that took the form of three phases. In the first phase we built the Life Fellowship Center.

Phase Two is called the educational wing because it provided space for the Sunday school classes. This last building is what we call the third phase, where we are now."

Pastor Smith is thankful for the growth of the church but does not focus on how large the building and membership has become. He and his wife Ida want to do God's work and be instruments that God uses to expand his Kingdom. "We just want to do effective ministry." Rising Star has more than 50 ministries. The church does not minister just within the city. God has blessed them to do community work, foreign ministry, and work throughout the United States.

*Excerpts reprinted with permission
From the **Body of Christ News**
October 2007 Issue*

Merry Christmas!

The ABCRM Staff wants to wish you and your family a very blessed and Merry Christmas this year!

May the Lord bless you and keep you and may you live in the joy of this season throughout the year to come.

"Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'"

Luke 2:13-14

REMEMBER with LOVE GIVE with GRATITUDE

Since 1935, American Baptists have contributed to special offerings received in their churches for retired ABC ministers and missionaries or their widowed spouses. The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) was established in 1977.

Through this annual offering, American Baptist congregations say thank you in a tangible way to the denomination's retired spiritual leaders. The offering provides them with:

- Emergency and other financial assistance, based on financial need; and
- "Thank You" checks, based on 15 or more years of ABC service.

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
John 13.35 (NRSV)

First Baptist Church of Lusk Takes Decisive Steps Forward in Ministry and Mission



First Baptist Church,
Sterling, CO on November 25:

- Julie Boren
- Paige Krier
- Sean Romero
- Beau Stieb
- Charissa Stieb
- Stacey Stieb
- Dave West
- Jeremy West
- Val West

First Baptist Church,
Lusk, WY on December 9:

- Kolby Eddy,
- McKayle Mosley
- Megham Mosley
- Raimee Goodwin
- Aaron Midkiff
- Darrell Daniels
- Larry Fox

Share the names of those who have been recently baptized in your church with the ABCRM family. Send information to the RMAB editor at jfischer@abcrm.org. Names will be published at least once a quarter.

American Baptist Mission Support Through November 2007

Details of ABCRM churches giving to American Baptist Mission Support (ABMS) is available on the ABCRM website. The numbers are available for January 2007 through November 2007. Click on the link below to see the giving report.



http://www.abcrm.org/communication/regional_financial.htm

On Sunday, December 9, First Baptist Church of Lusk, WY celebrated several important milestones. During the morning worship service, seven individuals were baptized. (See "Baptisms" to the right.) In the afternoon, the church family gathered together once again to participate in the licensing and installing of their associate pastor, Matt Fox, and to dedicate their new parking lot and parsonage.



L to R: Wayne Dvirnak, Matt Fox, and Tom Strock

Matt Fox is a recent graduate of the Frontier School of the Bible (FSB), located in LaGrange, WY. He has answered the call to pastoral ministry and has been working with Pastor Tom Strock for the past year and a half. During the special service, the following three speakers delivered charges: Dan Graves, the academic dean at FSB; Wayne Dvirnak, Ministry and Mission Coach for Wyoming and the Northern Front Range; and Tom Strock, senior pastor.

Matt's mother, Julie Fox, who lives in Michigan, sang a solo. His brother, Larry, led the congregational singing and sang a duet with Aimee Hausman, from FSB. Dave and Shirley Huizinga from FBC/Lusk sang a duet as well.

The laying on of hands (*right*) and prayer of installation was led by Karl Koester, an FSB faculty member. He heads the Christian Service Department and is in charge of helping to match students with area church ministry needs.



At the close of the service, Pastor Strock shared some personal reflections from his years of ministry at First Baptist. He also recognized several of the local leaders who have helped to move the church's ministry forward. He closed with a prayer of dedication for the new church parking lot and the parsonage. The team ministry of pastor and people at First Baptist Church in Lusk has been exciting and productive. We wish them God's continued blessing as Matt joins the ministry team.

*Submitted by Wayne Dvirnak
Ministry and Mission Coach
Wyoming and Northern Front Range*

Sign Up to Attend the Colorado ABWM Retreat January 18-20, 2008

The Colorado ABW Ministries is holding the Winter Retreat at the Franciscan Retreat Center at Mt. St. Francis, in Colorado Springs. The Center provides a quiet, reflective place of beauty for retreats. The charisma of the Center is the Franciscan tradition of sharing, hospitality and joyful service.



Virginia Holmstrom will be the featured speaker for the retreat. Virginia is the Executive Director of American Baptist Women's Ministries. Her leadership has guided the organization's national board to launch a national mission initiative that seeks to end the trafficking of women and children for sexual purposes. The project, "Break the Chains: Slavery in the 21st Century," endeavors to raise \$250,000 to help women and children who are victims of trafficking and prostitution.

Virginia has been actively involved in American Baptist Women's Ministries for more than 30 years. She is a frequent speaker and workshop/retreat leader at regional and national women's conferences.

Registration at the retreat center begins at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, January 18, 2008. Dinner will be served at 6:00 p.m. and the program will start at 7:00 p.m. Some free time is built into the schedule Saturday afternoon and Saturday night will be the traditional talent show.

A deposit of \$30 is due at the time of registration. The balance is due at the Retreat Center. (Late registration, after December 21, 2007, the fee is \$40.) The total cost is \$111 for a shared room or \$141 for a single room. This includes five meals. Contact the Registrar Donna Oliver for more information at dloliver1@juno.com.

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