

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

Transitions in Leadership

The Scripture is filled with transitions in leadership: Moses to Joshua, Eli to Samuel, Elijah to Elisha to name a few. It seems each time it was a time of transition. God called a new leader for the next phase of what He envisioned for his people. Moses performed a specific role and accomplished great things for God. Joshua came along and was a different kind of leader to meet the new challenges of the day.

As a young man I served as moderator of my church. Shortly after taking office the long time Sunday School Superintendent came to me and said he wanted to resign. He had held that job since the inception of the church 8 years earlier. I was at a loss of what to do until I learned that a new couple, recently transferred to Denver, had experience with Sunday Schools. They quickly took up the challenge and the Sunday School flourished. Since then I've learned to depend on God to raise up new leaders to be ready at the right time in the right place. It's our task to recognize those leaders and accept their leadership or to be the leaders and accept the call—but that's a topic for another day.

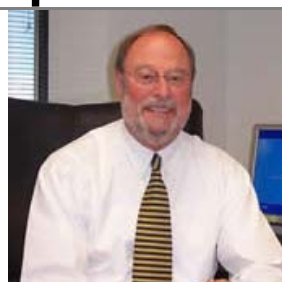
March 1st marks the transition of leadership for ABCRM.

For nine months Rev. Larry VanSpriell has worked long and hard to fulfill the responsibilities of Interim Executive Minister. He came at time of confusion and unrest. His chaplain's heart has brought comfort and calm to staff, elected leadership, and many churches throughout our Region. At the time he was hired your leadership looked at several candidates who had extensive experience as executive ministers, but God lead us to Larry specifically because of the role he was able to fulfill. He has done it well and we will be indebted to him in many ways



*Richard Schweissing
ABCRM President*

long after people forget the specifics of what he did. So, just as it was with the leaders of old, it is with sadness that we close this chapter of our Region life. Larry will be



missed, but not forgotten. He lives near Boulder and we hope to continue to draw upon his compassion and spirit for years to come. At the same time, we wish him and Tam the best as they transition back to retirement and time to enjoy family. When you have opportunity to meet Larry and Tam in the next few months—and they will be around—please let them know how much we all have appreciated them.

Now comes the time for new leadership. Rev. Dr. Steven Van Ostran arrived this week in time to participate in the Region Board meeting February 29-March 1. Those who were involved in the search process and on the Board that confirmed the search team's recommendation are firmly convinced he has been led to us by God. He brings ample experience to the position that fits our Region well. Many of the challenges we face are not unfamiliar ones to a man of his experience. At the same time God undoubtedly has plans for him and us that we have yet to discern. That may include new directions, new challenges, new opportunities. It will be exciting to see what God has in store.

As Rev. Van Ostran comes on board, we ask for your prayers. We urge you to welcome him with open arms, invite him to your churches, get to know his heart. Then be prepared for the future as God leads us to do His work in the Region.

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Do you have something you think the Region should know about? Send your news to be published in the RMAB. Contact Jessica at jfischer@abcrm.org for more information.

The View From Here: “Pulling Out of the Driveway”



I remember so well the *beginning* of my ministry career, it began with an *ending* that I did not anticipate.

After three great years in Rochester, NY, with the amazing people of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, our worldly possessions were in a moving van headed to Ohio for our first pastorate following seminary. The five of us and our dog climbed into our auto. I got behind the wheel, started the car, and couldn't go any further. I couldn't pull out of that driveway because of the powerful emotions that had a firm hold on me. I simply couldn't see with the tears welling up in my eyes. Tam had to drive that first leg toward our new beginning in Ohio.

And now many years later Tam and I have come full-cycle, for we are at the other end of a wonderful ministry career. The many blessings to us are beyond measure. I have certainly learned over a lifetime that endings and beginnings punctuate our lives all along the way. I have also learned that investing oneself fully makes endings more difficult, yet also makes beginnings more exciting. And, personally, I wouldn't want it any other way. It is a rhythm that I've learned to embrace and honor.

Endings and beginnings—sometimes joyful, sometimes painful, endings and beginnings are special moments that mark each one's journey. Both are sacred. Both are necessary. I have discovered that many of life's endings and beginnings are about “pulling out of the driveway”



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with a heart full of gratitude, tears in our eyes, and moving toward God's promise that a new beginning awaits. To be sure, endings and beginnings are often powerful “passages” in our lives.

I am reminded of the truth that the whole of the Christian faith is about endings and beginnings. The faith that we cherish so, and the faith that we seek to share with our world with grace and compassion, is about endings and beginnings. Endings and beginnings create very important change. Almost every biblical story in the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament poses the possibility and the hope for change. If change is to occur there will be an ending and a new beginning taking place.

Steve VanOstran, our new Executive Minister, has pulled out of his familiar “driveway” in Topeka, temporarily leaving his family behind, due to the school year. We are all very excited and pleased that Steve is our new spiritual leader. I have had the privilege of spending some time with Steve and Debbie and I am thrilled with God calling them both to this region. I believe that you will grow to love them very quickly. May we be reminded of the need for prayerful support of Steve and his family during this time of transition.

The experts in change tell us that there is always stress with change, even the change that we choose and seek causes some dis-equilibrium. Please extend your caring to Steve and Debbie and family in whatever form that takes, and that will make their new adventure of endings and beginnings very positive.

I want to thank all of our ABCRM family out in the Region. What an honor it has been to visit with pastors and congregations across the region.

Your kindness and caring will never be forgotten and I thank you so much for reminding me in your faithfulness and hospitality that being a part of the American Baptist family is very special, indeed.

It is time for me to pull out of this driveway. I shall cherish these days and these colleagues, always. Yes, my eyes are quite misty and Tam probably needs to take the wheel once again. I have such appreciation and affection for this special team that I've been privileged to serve with. I have been so blessed in this experience to journey for a time with such wonderful colleagues—Karen, Alyce and Jessica in the office, and Mike, Mary and Wayne, our exceptional Ministry & Mission coaches. It has been a great joy to work with our other faithful servants, the Executive Committee, the Board, our various committees, and Rich, our extraordinary ABCRM President. Truly, we have a superb team for Steve to work with in the days and years ahead.

Dear Ones all across this region, please open your arms and hearts to Steve. He is a really special guy. Steve has a wonderful heart, an exceedingly faithful spirit, and a compelling vision for supporting our churches and pastors as Christ's hands and feet in our region and across our world. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise God for Steve and for the new beginning for ABCRM!

*With love &
deepest gratitude,
Larry VanSpriell*

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

Home Mission on Our Doorstep MtW: More Than a Week



Attention youth and youth leaders of ABCRM. Are you thinking about this summer and the things you would like to do as a youth group? Whether you are the only youth in your church or if you have a large youth group, consider attending this event held right in ABCRM's backyard. We are hoping for a great turnout from the youth of ABCRM.

National Ministries (NM) is providing in-depth planning and support for the next national youth gathering. The 2008 National Gathering of American Baptist Youth, called MtW, is expected to draw 2,000 youth and adults to the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, CO, in July.

The event's media-age theme—MtW (the text message-like abbreviation for "More Than a Week")—supposes that the experiences of Estes Park will help mold in participants an ongoing Christ-centered character and commitment. As in previous national youth gatherings, many MtW attendees will return to their homes, churches, and communities better equipped to live out the gospel message in word and deed. And they will bring home the joy of new friendships and an appreciation for formative fellowship that will remain for a lifetime. That call to personal spiritual growth and service reflects a long-standing American Baptist priority that encourages youth to continually deepen their relationships with Christ, while constantly seeking renewal and opportunities to impact a needy world.

For the Rev. Reginald T. Fletcher, NM's national coordinator for Youth and Campus Ministries, the role of youth as catalysts for change is a necessary and dynamic one: "I feel that I am part of a new generation of freedom fighters that will help divinely stimulate, spiritually irritate, and creatively motivate young leaders to be torch carriers for truth and beacons of hope for those in despair."

To learn more about More Than a Week, visit:

www.nationalministries.org/mtw.

More Than a Week is made possible by generous support of the America for Christ Offering. Support the 2008 offering with a joyful heart—and help to meet the needs of mission on our doorstep with the love of Christ that urges all of us on.

National Ministries



What is the Ministerial Leadership Committee (MLC)?

The MLC is the committee that replaced the Department of Ministry. And no, it was not just a name change. The MLC, is still entrusted with many of the same tasks as were entrusted to the Department of Ministry, but has had a total revamping of mission, purpose and guidelines of operation.

The purpose of the MLC is to

- ◆ support and encourage those seeking ordination,
- ◆ support and encourage both personal and professional health of clergy,
- ◆ protect the integrity of ministry,
- ◆ maintain and support professional standards as prescribed in The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of American Baptist Churches,
- ◆ help ordination candidates discern their call and fitness for professional ministry in the ABCUSA
- ◆ recommend ordained candidates for chaplaincy endorsement,
- ◆ be the repository of files pertaining to ordination candidates including background checks, clergy with allegations pending, clergy who have ordination recognition withdrawn or suspended.

With the changing complexion of ministers and ordinations, the MLC has done a great deal in developing the educational process and offerings to those seeking some form of ordination recognition. It should be noted that most of the classes are open to anyone interested in taking them, as they are offered.

[Continued on page 4](#)

What is the MLC?

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Some of the classes that are now offered and will be offered are:

- ◆ Spiritual formation
- ◆ American Baptist History and Polity
- ◆ Professional Ethics
- ◆ Systematic Theology
- ◆ Old Testament
- ◆ New Testament
- ◆ Worship and Renewal
- ◆ Preaching
- ◆ Educational Ministries and Church Administration
- ◆ Pastoral Care

I would encourage you to check the ABCRM Training Academy web site for current classes, cost, location of training, and other information you may need at <http://www.abcrm.org/pastors/trainingacademy.htm>.

We are pleased with our ongoing development of the MLC and will continue to tweak the process to better serve our Region. We encourage your questions, input, and prayer support.

*Mark Jervis
MLC Member*

Who should attend the Healthy Small Church Workshop?

- ◆ Pastors
- ◆ Moderators
- ◆ Deacons
- ◆ Trustees
- ◆ Elders
- ◆ Members of the Church Council
- ◆ Lay Leaders who serve in any capacity
- ◆ Judicatory Leaders
- ◆ Denominational Leaders

The Healthy Small Church

Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues

The Healthy Small Church Workshop is based on Dennis Bickers book by the same title. In this workshop, pastors and congregational leaders are challenged to explore the issues that lead to a healthy “self-esteem” for small churches.

If a church is afflicted with unhealthy issues, such as feelings of unimportance, a lack of vision, exclusivity, limited resources, or unbalanced leadership, then its health is threatened and it may eventually die. An unhealthy church, however, can get well and experience vital spiritual growth.

This workshop will give church leaders the tools to diagnose the issues that can threaten the life of a church and prescribes practical remedies for treatment.

The goal of this workshop is to help pastors and lay leaders develop the ability to recognize the symptoms that lead to disease in the local church. By acting accordingly, churches can regain their health.



Signs that a church is healthy:

- ◆ Has a positive self-image
- ◆ Shares a common vision that creates a sense of purpose and unity
- ◆ Maintains community while still warmly welcoming new visitors
- ◆ Practices the importance of faithful stewardship and financial support
- ◆ Understands ministry to be the responsibility of all the members of the church
- ◆ Encourages everyone to serve according to his or her spiritual gifts—not by seniority or guilt

Dennis Bickers:

Rev. Dennis Bickers currently serves as an Area Minister with the American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky. For 20 years, he was a bivocational pastor in a small, rural church in Indiana. He is a graduate of Indiana University Southeast and serves on the Advisory Board for the Center for Bivocational Ministries at Campbellsville University.

Workshop Dates and Locations

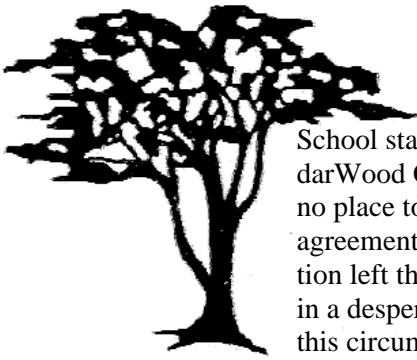
Monday, April 7, 2008
Bethany Baptist Church
Colorado Springs, CO

Wednesday, April 9, 2008
First Baptist Church
Palisade, CO

Friday, April 11, 2008
First Baptist Church
Cheyenne, WY

*Submitted by
Mike Oldham*

ABCRM Ministry & Mission Coach



CedarWood Christian Academy Continues a Tradition of Aurora Community Baptist Church

School starts in one week and CedarWood Christian Academy has no place to meet. A broken lease agreement and poor communication left the Aurora private school in a desperate situation. It was in this circumstance that the Board of

established guidelines and channels to deal with any circumstances that might arise in the future.

The children and the school continue to flourish, now nine years later, and a beautiful relationship between the church and the Christian school exists. The children have sang at ACBC events, enjoyed ice cream or other treats church members have given, and mostly loved and prayed for their “adopted” grandmothers and grandfathers who have given them a home.

CedarWood will always be grateful for the willingness of ACBC to share their facilities in our time of need. We believe God has provided for His children to grow in the ways of the Lord through the hearts of His people, the people of Aurora Community Baptist Church. When you bless His little ones, how can you not be blessed?

Written by
Gene Oborny
Administrator

CedarWood Christian Academy

Aurora Community Baptist Church (ACBC) was approached about the use of their education building as a home for the 90 plus student body.

Pastor Le Fox and the Board heard the leaders share their vision of raising up godly young people to know and serve God, questioned various specifics that might be required, and prayed about how to be available to the Lord in this matter. From the onset the attitude was one of mutual respect and genuinely seeking ways to be a blessing.

ACBC voted to open their arms to the children of CedarWood, chose to move some meetings and supplies to the parsonage to make certain classrooms available, and

ABCRM Library



If you are like many people in the Region, you love reading Christian related books. ABCRM has some of those books that may be of interest to you. As a way of providing more services for you as a part of the Region, these books—*along with other titles*—are available to be checked out. Just like a public library, however, these books must be returned within *three weeks* or a fee will be charged.

The books can be checked out at the ABCRM office at 6855 S. Havana St., Suite 220, in Centennial, CO, or you can pay the book rate for shipping and we can send a book to you. Books available for check out will be online soon at

www.abcrm.org/abcrmlibrary.htm.

A Janitor for Jesus Rev. Dr. Thomas Paul Azar

Becoming a Healthier Pastor Ronald W. Richardson

Choosing the Kingdom John Addison Dally

The Church of All Ages Howard Vanderwell

Church on the Edge of Somewhere George B. Thompson, Jr.

Creating a Healthier Church Ronald W. Richardson

Entering the World of the Small Church Anthony G. Pappas

Giving to a Giving God J. Alfred Smith, Senior

The Healthy Small Church Dennis Bickers

Holy Places Nancy DeMott, Tim Shapiro, and Brent Bill

How Your Church Family Works Peter L. Steinke

In Dying We Are Born Peter Bush
If This is the Way the World Works William O. Avery & Beth Ann Gaede

Paying Attention Gary E. Peluso-Verdend

Preaching Ethically Ronald D. Sisk

Reinventing Sunday Brad Berglund

Reinventing Worship Brad Berglund

Tribal Church Carol Howard Merritt

When God Speaks Through You Craig A. Satterlee

When Moses Meets Aaron Gil Rendle & Susan Beaumont

The Work of the Chaplain Naomi K. Paget & Janet R. McCormack



ABCRM 2008 Regional Calendar

March 26-April 9→ ABCRM Mission Trip to Mesang, Cambodia

April 4-6→ ABCRM Training Academy Preaching Course

April 7→ Healthy Small Church Workshop at Bethany Baptist Church in Colorado Springs, CO at 9:00-4:30

April 9→ Healthy Small Church Workshop at First Baptist Church in Palisade, CO at 9:00-4:30

April 11→ Healthy Small Church Workshop at First Baptist Church in Cheyenne, WY at 9:00-4:30

April 13-26→ ABCRM Mission Trip to Bluefields, Nicaragua

June 6-7→ Wyoming ABWM Annual Conference in Laramie

June 13-15→ Colorado ABWM Annual Conference in Denver

June 15-21→ Front Range Camping

June 19-30→ ABCRM Mission Trip to Sophia, Bulgaria

June 22-28→ Grand Mesa Middle School Camp

June 29-July 4→ Grand Mesa Elementary Camp

July 6-12→ Grand Mesa High School Camp

July 6-12→ Camp Wyoba Junior Camp (grades 5-6)

July 13-19→ Camp Wyoba Junior High Camp (grades 7-8)

July 20-26→ Camp Wyoba Senior High Camp (grades 9-12)

July 27-30→ Camp Wyoba Primary Camp (grades 3-4)

August 1-2→ ABCRM Board Meeting at Camp Wyoba

September 16-18→ SoulJourners Retreat for 55+

October 17-18→ Annual Gathering

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist is published by the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains
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*Discover your
PASSION!
Realize your
MISSION!*

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