

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

Honoring a Legacy ABCRCM Board Launches New Initiatives

When a church determines that it must close its doors there is a lot of heartache. Souls have been saved, fellowship has been treasured, and ministry has been fruitful. Nevertheless, an unwanted end has come.



these two properties would *not* be spent for current operations. Rather, this money will be set aside to create legacies that will honor the memory of those churches.

Sometimes, a new beginning is possible. As the demographics surrounding Aurora Community Baptist Church (ACBC) changed, the membership determined they could not continue. However, determined that ministry should continue in that location, ACBC, with the support of ABCRCM, launched a new Hispanic ministry, Palabra de Fe. Still in its infancy, much nurturing needs to continue, but a legacy has been left.

Such was not the case with two other churches in our Region. Early in 2006 ABCRCM sold the property in Green River, Wyoming. The property that once housed Evangel Baptist Church in Wheat Ridge, Colorado will be sold on March 19, 2008. Both churches deeded their property over to the Region hoping that something good would come out of their pain.

At the regular ABCRCM Board meeting February 29-March 1 the Board took a bold step. After hearing the financial report that our current operating budget is not as healthy as we would like, the commitment was made that proceeds from the sale of

According to the Board directive, the money may be spent in two ways: *new church plants* and *church transformation*. First, there is tremendous growth throughout our Region. Many of those areas are not served by a church where the Gospel can be readily heard by the new residents. Therefore, a proactive plan will be developed to birth new church plants. Second, many of our current churches are struggling for different reasons. Without help, they may face a future not unlike that of First Baptist, Green River, and Evangel. There are many programs for church transformation. Those churches which genuinely want to examine their ministry and their community will have the opportunity to apply for support to bring about the needed transformation that will revitalize their church. This will not be money to fund current budgets of the church, but to enter into transformation and renewal.

To get these programs started, the Board determined that it would be important to have a team trained for each venture that would be able to evaluate and assist the Board in making the decision as to where funding support would be best served.

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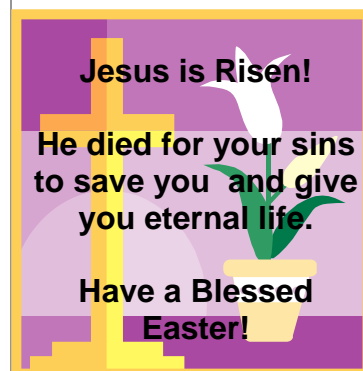
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Office Toys and Our Common Ministry

Throughout my career I have acquired a number of “office toys.” I’m not sure what it says about my personality that most of these were not toys I had bought, but ones given to me by parishioners, or colleagues or my family. So as I was packing to move my office from Kansas to Colorado, I had some choices to make... not just which books do I really want to have in my new office, but also which toys!

I left the sandbox with dump truck, shovel and rake that my colleague from Nebraska had gifted to me on her retirement (probably for the same reason she left it to me... couldn’t imagine getting it here without sand all over the place!). I offered the mini dartboard to my son and the basketball game went to another worthy recipient. But the magnet with the metal pieces that you can mound, mold and remold... that made the trip.



I don’t know exactly what it is about this game that so attracts (or perhaps - distracts) me. I just know that I like to fiddle

with the shapes. I’ll form a tower and then crush it. I’ll pull the pieces off and throw them on top of the desk and sweep the magnetic base back and forth to gather the pieces back together. Then I’ll mold and shape all over again.

No matter how I try to shape the many little individual metal pieces into one cohesive shape, there always seem to be a few stragglers out on the edges that I have to coax back to the pile. Oh, they’re not lost. The power of the magnet holds them in place, ready to be retrieved. But neither are they part of the sculpture that I hope to create. My personality can’t just leave them be, I have to nudge them

into place; into closer proximity in order that they somehow be connected with all the other pieces and form a shape that suits my fancy at the moment.

So that toy came with me to the Rocky Mountain Region. As I reflect on it, perhaps it was more than happenstance that prevented me from offering this toy to someone and bringing it with me. It seems to me that in some small way this toy is an analogy of who we are as a region. We are a bunch of individual congregations held together by one powerful force. Now, what that force is can make for an interesting discussion.

There are those who contend it should be our common doctrine that holds us together. But as “traditional” Baptists (a term Jimmy Carter introduced at the New Baptist Covenant event), we know that while the doctrines we hold are similar, they are not the same. God directs and leads us over different paths under the authority of scripture, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the individual experiences and traditions we have encountered in our lives. These differences in fact allow us to be molded into that malleable sculpture God wants us to be. Because we are not all the same, the structure becomes that much more interesting. So the magnetic force cannot come from “doctrine”, despite the reality that for most of us it is so similar. Instead that magnet is and must always be our common faith in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is this faith that holds us together and allows us, though separate, independent congregations, to be one unified regional body. The shape of that “body” or sculpture is dependent upon the sculptor who is larger than us, however, and is almost constantly changing. Thus a lot of people have asked me about my “vision” for the Region and its ministry.

We hear a lot about “vision” these

days. Pastors are told they need to have a “vision” in order for their church



to be successful. Pastors of large ministries teach “visioning” workshops and utilize the text “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18) to encourage pastors to put together a vision for their ministry. The problem with this is that the vision must come from God if it is to truly qualify as a vision and not be just a mirage! Too often this detail is forgotten and we have pastors and church leaders touting their own flawed vision as being from God when it is in fact a function of their own ego based on their own limited view of the Gospel. Paul reminds us that our vision is incomplete (1 Cor. 13:12). So the shape of our sculpture needs to be determined by God. That doesn’t mean we can’t get some sense of what God is doing. Indeed God promises to lead us through the valley; God will provide us a vision. But generally this “vision” comes through nudges and tweaks over time, rather than one clear picture.

So how does God seem to be nudging us at this time as a regional body? Well, God seems to be nudging us towards a common ministry in which the local church’s mission and ministry is supported and lifted up by the whole body. We have a lot of churches that are in need of the support of their sister congregations. Now, when I am speaking of support, I am not talking so much financial support as I am support for their ministry in other ways. In fact I would dare to say that every congregation has some gift it can offer to other congregations in our Region.

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Office Toys...

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There is some level of expertise or of energy or of resources you have that would be of benefit to one of your sister congregations. God seems to be nudging us towards a ministry in which the Region staff and the structures of the regional organization serve as a clearing house for this type of support. While this does not sound a lot different from the historic ministry of the Region, the modes in which this ministry must be done will continue to change. The way in which we supported our sister congregations in the 1950's will not work in 2008. But that is only one part of God's nudging of our common ministry. God also seems to be nudging in the area of mission.

In the past, when we spoke of "missions" it was often as a lead up to encouraging our financial support of missions (still a needed resource by the way, but that's another article). But as our world changes—yes, I chickened out and didn't use the word "evolve"—it seems that there is a need for our church families not just to connect to missions through supporting missionaries financially, but by working alongside our missionaries in various sorts of projects. In other words, there is a need for individual members of our congregations to become short term missionaries in various capacities. Our national structure is reframing itself to accommodate this shift and we need to do the same thing here in our Region. It is not that there isn't the continued need to support our missionaries financially (there is), but there is a need for us to see God through the eyes of other cultures, to connect to other Christians in other lands personally. We need to sit down with our brothers and sisters and hear them tell how God is working in their lives so that the dim reflection we see through the glass becomes a bit clearer. So God seems to be nudging us

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towards finding new ways to become more personally involved with taking the message to other cultures, both here in the United States and around the world. Some of that work has already begun.

Most of you are aware of the mission trips that have been and are being planned and sponsored by the Region in 2008. One team has already been to Thailand and returned home safely. Soon a team will be headed for Nicaragua and later this year a group will be headed to Bulgaria. These are all wonderful opportunities to see God at work in new ways. But there are many opportunities here in the United States as well



to be involved in personal missions. Perhaps your church could sponsor your youth on a mission trip to one of our Neighborhood Action Programs like Curtis Park or if you wanted to go a bit further Bethel Neighborhood Center in Kansas City. Maybe you'd rather experience something outside the

"inner city" so perhaps you would want to arrange some time at Anadarko Christian Center in Oklahoma. Or maybe you would want to be a part of the ABC Blitz Build in Louisiana in April (http://www.nationalministries.org/caring_ministries/vim/ for more information). The point is God seems to be nudging us to be "doers of the word" not just hearers.

There are many other nudges of the Spirit taking place all around us. The key is for us to continue to be drawn together by our common faith, mission and ministry knowing that God's purpose will be worked through us as long as we are faithful. I trust that you are feeling the pull of His Spirit today and every day.

*In Christ,
Steve Van O
ABCRCM Executive Minister*

Honoring a Legacy

[Continued from page 1](#)

The Region is currently seeking individuals who have a heart *either* for church planting or for church transformation to serve on these teams. Individuals are being asked to make several specific commitments. First, since the Region will invest in training for each team, individuals should be prepared to serve a minimum of three years. Second, the training is not yet defined, but could mean several weekends or possibly a week or two of intensive training to get started. Third, once the teams have been established, they will meet face to face at least once a year with additional meetings via conference calls.

If you would like to serve on either of these teams or if you know of someone who should that you would like to nominate, please send their name and contact information to Richard Schweissing at the Region Office or call in that information with the request that it be directed to Rich.

The Board will be intentional about appointing people to the teams to assure representation that reflects the diverse nature of our Region—lay and clergy, geography, ethnicity, age, and gender.

Please join our Region in prayer that the legacies of churches no longer with us will live on through vital ministries in other churches and new areas.



*Richard Schweissing
ABCRCM President*

ABCRM Missions Team Completes Successful February 6-19 Trip to Thailand

Thanks to wonderful support by ABC-IM missionaries Jeff and Annie Dieselberg in Bangkok and Chuck and Ruth Fox in Chiang Rai, and by many of the team's new Thai and Akha friends in Thailand, the ABCRM Thailand Missions Experiences team successfully completed their visit to Thailand from February 6-19. Team members included Carl and Carmen Ferguson (Crossroads Baptist in Northglenn); Bruce and Beth Cook, and Barbara Fuller (First Baptist of Colorado Springs); Karen VanValkenburgh (ABCRM Office), and mission trip leader Kerry Hassler (First Baptist of Boulder).

The ABCRM Thailand mission team first stayed in Bangkok from February 8-9 to see the Dieselberg's NightLight ministry that helps women escape prostitution by offering them jobs to make jewelry sold via their NightLight website (see www.nightlightbangkok.com). Then the team flew to Chiang Rai to experience the ministry of Chuck Fox, who spreads the Word of God in Akha villages through his preaching and



other activities he had organized to help the Akhas (see foxthailand.akhahilltribe.org).

Chuck's wife Ruth helps Akha women to make and sell hand-sewn craft items through the Chiang Rai Akha Crafts Center. She operates this center and the Akha Crafts Internet Store (see <http://akhahilltribe.org>).

During the week of February 11, part of the mission team renovated a primary/secondary school in the Akha village of Sansuk. The others in the group helped the women who work at the Chiang Rai Akha Crafts Center. They provided library management support of Ruth's "Family Learning

Center" international school, and showed women in the New Life Center, next to the Fox's home, how to knit. ABCRM provided \$4500 to the Chuck and Ruth Fox "ABC-IM Specific Projects Fund" for their use in buying construction and crafts materials prior to the mission team's visit. To add to the mission trip experience, the team saw a few local sights and went on an elephant ride near Chiang Rai. To see a full account of the February 6-19 Thailand Missions Experiences mission trip, see the ABCRM "Missions Experiences Blog" at abcrmissionexperiences.blogspot.com.

The last 2008 ABCRM Missions Experiences trip you still have an opportunity to participate in is from June 19-30 planned and hosted by our regional ABC-IM missionaries Tom and Terry Myers in Sofia, Bulgaria. To sign up for this trip, contact Kerry Hassler at 303-665-7487, or send an email to kerryhassler@comcast.net. Been called? GO!

Kerry Hassler
ABCRM Missions Team Member

ABCRM Has Been Invited to Be Surprised by God's People!

They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" Mark 2:2-12



In collaborations with the Board of International Ministries of the ABC-USA, and the American Baptist Churches of Oregon, we at Eastwood Baptist Church would like to invite you and your congregations to come to Medford, Oregon this summer for the World Mission Conference on the weekend of July 18-20, 2008. Registration and more information are available online through the International Ministries website at www.internationalministries.org.

As one of four regional conferences, it is our hope to bring together brothers and sisters from the West Coast to meet with missionaries from around the world, including Dan Buttry (Global Consultant), Mike Lowry (Congo), Karen

Smith (Thailand), Bucky Sydnor (Nepal), and Duane Binkley (Thailand). Reid Trulson of International Ministries is planning to attend. The 2008 theme is "Surprised by God's People."

The conference is being planned as a family event, with a Children's Mission Adventure and a Youth Mission Encounter to run concurrent with the conference. Additionally, we are developing several post conference family "fun" opportunities for all ages, like rafting the Rogue River, a day trip to Crater Lake National Park, the Hellgate Jet Boat Excursion, the Britt Music Festival in nearby Jacksonville, and the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland. So come to the beautiful Rogue Valley, bring the family, and "Be Surprised by God's People."

Randolph T. Miller
Pastor of Eastwood Baptist Church
Medford, OR

ABCRM Workshop and Course Offerings*

* Make sure to note the registration deadline dates for the training course and workshop.

ABCRM Training Academy

Course Offering

PREACHING COURSE (Truth through Personality)

- When:** April 4th – 6th, 2008 (starting at noon on Friday, April 4th – Sunday noon April 6th)
- Where:** Region Office, 6855 S. Havana St., Centennial, CO 80112
- Cost:** \$225.00 (includes housing for two nights, three lunches, and one dinner)
\$125.00 (includes meals only/no housing)
- Instructor:** Instructor: Rev. Dr. Ray Lincoln
- Who:** Open to everyone — new preachers, pastors, evangelists, laity
Also, fulfill requirements for ABCRM Regional Ordination
- What:** Essential elements of preaching both in preparation and delivery
Concepts will probe the roles of both active partners – God and you
Develop skills to apply some major findings of neuroscience to the mental activity of persuasion as it affects the preacher's role

Registration

Deadline: March 31, 2008

Find the registration form online at <http://www.abcrm.org/pastors/trainingacademy.htm>.

Sponsored by ABCRM Ministerial Leadership Committee

The Healthy Small Church

Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues

Location and date

Monday, April 7, 2008	Wednesday, April, 9, 2008	Friday, April 11, 2008
Bethany Baptist Church Colorado Springs, CO	First Baptist Church Palisade, CO	First Baptist Church Cheyenne, WY



Find the registration form online at <http://www.abcrm.org/healthysmall.htm>.

The workshops will be from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Lunch is included with the registration fee.

The registration deadline is March 28, 2008. Cancellations must be received by March 28 and are subject to a \$15 non-refundable processing fee. Cancellations after March 28 are not refundable.

Attention Church Musicians and Musical Families



grade are invited to join in the youth choir. Students may reside in Robbins North and South Halls or may room with parent or guardians. The youth choir has special social events and activities scheduled throughout the week.

Children, students entering 3rd through 7th grade, are even invited to participate in the children's choir which rehearses each morning. A Middle School choir (6th-7th grades) meets in the afternoon. The week's rehearsals culminate in a time of sharing on Friday morning. Older children also have the opportunity to join a handbell choir.

Judson College is also offering CEU's this summer for the conference. They are currently identifying the process necessary to make that happen. More information will be available in the letter confirming your registration.

President Bruce Snyder, of the FABM, invites you to join him, the Executive Board, and the entire leadership team of 2008 for an entire week of "enriching your spiritual life through music and worship."

For registration information go to the FABM web page at www.fabm.com, contact the ABCRM office, or contact your church office.

*Joyce Crowder
FABM
Executive Secretary*

It's already time to make your summer plans to be a part of the Conference for Church Musicians, 2008, sponsored by the Fellowship of American Baptist Musicians (FABM). The Conference is held at the beautiful Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, Wisconsin. During the week of July 12-19, 2008, church musicians from around the country will engage in all types of music making.

Adults are invited as singers, ringers, and instrumentalists to unite to make music together and deepen their faith and understanding of music ministry. Casual dress is appropriate for the week with "church dress" optional for Sunday evening worship and the Friday evening celebration.

Young Adults, 18-25 year olds called Y2A, are invited to participate in the adult choir and workshops, and their own choir, Bible study, and social events. Members are challenged to become aware of their personal impact as ministers through music.

Instrumentalists will have ample opportunities at the conference. Organ and piano workshops are scheduled throughout the week. Three levels of handbell choirs and a full orchestra all prepare for concerts shared at the end of the week. Other workshops and ensembles play throughout the week. Bell ringers should bring gloves and table top music stands if possible.

Youth, students entering 8th grade through students just completing 12



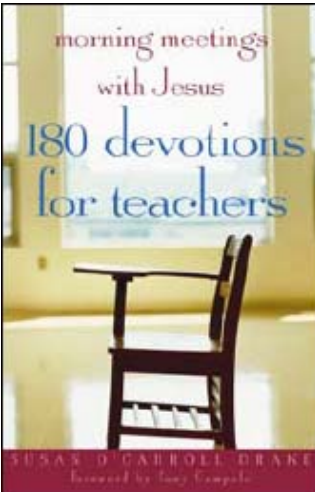
Articles are Needed for This Newsletter

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist (RMAB) needs your news. People in the Region are interested in what is going on at your church. Please send your news articles or ideas to the ABCRM Communication Specialist, Jessica Fischer at jfischer@abcrm.org, or at 303-988-3900.



Devotional Speaks to the Reality Faced by Today's Teachers

Disillusioned with the Norman Rockwell images of the classroom that pervade most teacher devotionals, former public school teacher Susan O'Carroll Drake offers an inspirational resource that addresses the reality of today's teachers. *Morning Meetings with Jesus: 180 Devotions for Teachers* is uniquely designed for each school day in the teaching year, and provides light-hearted and insightful devotions with lessons from the Master Teacher. Each entry comes complete with:



- Recommended Bible reading
- Real-life vignette
- Insight from Jesus' teaching model
- Application of the Scripture text
- Daily challenge and prayer

The uniquely relevant anecdotes cover modern issues

that face teachers—especially in the urban public schools, including poverty, family issues, overcrowding, lack of resources, and violence. Throughout, the book offers reassurance of God's presence in the teacher's life and classroom.

Prolific author and President of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education Tony Campolo affirms the need for *Morning Meetings with Jesus*: "Christian teachers can so live their lives before their students and colleagues that something of Christ is revealed and the message of God's love is clearly communicated. We need teachers who will do this—and teachers need a book such as this one to exhort their spirits to learn first from Jesus and to strengthen their hearts in the ministry of teaching."

About the Author: Susan O'Carroll Drake is a former public high-school teacher who now supports teachers as a classroom volunteer and executive board member of the Parent Teacher Association. Drake holds an MS in biology and human nutrition and a BS in psychology. During her years in the classroom, she received numerous teaching honors, including being named Colorado's Outstanding Biology Teacher.

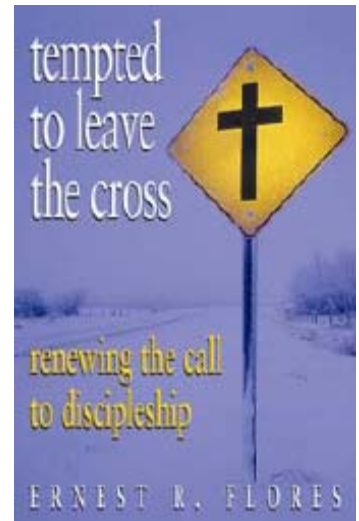
Press Release
Judson Press

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

New Book Challenges Victory Theology and the "Health and Wealth" Gospel

Who is Christianity about, anyway?

It seems that many of us have gone after a Christianity based on the motto "What God can do for you and your situation." We have become more American in our consumeristic obsession than we are like Jesus and his suffering servanthood. Some of my colleagues and I have identified what we refer to as "victory theology," in which the focus on God and Christ is essentially for the purpose of gaining the victory for ourselves. Healings, miracles, jobs, financial prosperity—the whole "health and wealth" gospel—all of it is based on the idea that God is really God only if we are victorious. And we struggle to become anything like the Jesus, who "laid down his life for his friends." And we certainly fail to lead anybody else to become like him.—from the Introduction



In the new Judson Press book *Tempted to Leave the Cross: Renewing the Call to Discipleship*, author and pastor Ernest R. Flores considers the cross of Jesus and what it represents in the Christian church today. Recognizing that many Christians are too busy climbing the ladder of success to "cling to the old rugged cross," Flores calls for readers to center their beliefs and actions in the cross and to value the high price that Jesus paid for our salvation. Self-care, self-fulfillment, and self-satisfaction need to be replaced with sacrifice, self-denial, and faithfulness—the very meaning of the cross. Offering solid biblical study in a conversational style, Flores embraces the cross not only as a symbol of personal salvation, but also as a call to kingdom service. As Christians, we are to be selfless and sacrificial in our pursuit of justice in the world.

Complete with "Cross Examinations" for small-group use, Flores presents a powerfully prophetic discipleship resource.

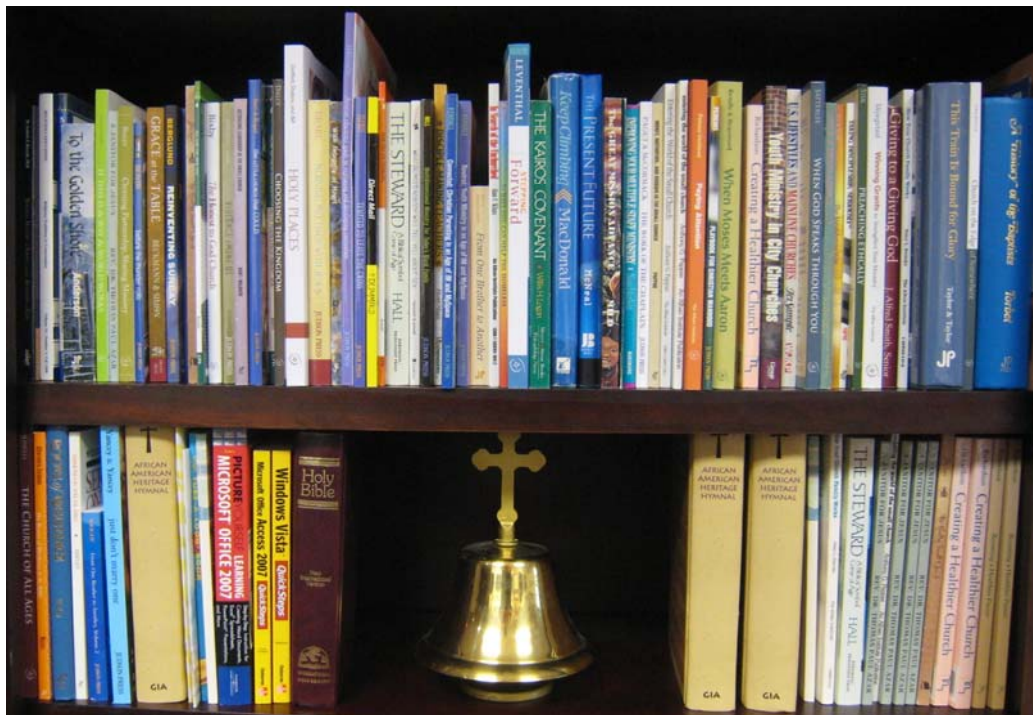
About the Author: Ernest R. Flores, MDiv, is pastor at Second Baptist Church in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Previously, Rev. Flores served churches in New Jersey and California, preached as an evangelist across the United States and in Mexico, and taught on the faculties of Azusa Pacific University and Latin American Bible Institute.

Press Release
Judson Press

RMAB 3/15/08

Books are Available for You to Use

The ABCRM Library is now open. You can find a list of books available for check out online at www.abcrm.org/abcrmlibrary.htm. (The books on [page 7](#) are available in the Library.) Books can be checked out for three weeks. A small fee will be charged for late returns. The library is growing with new and useful books. Please take advantage of this FREE resource.



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*Discover your
PASSION!
Realize your
MISSION!*

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