

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

“The Median Size of American Churches is 75 People,” Says Rev. Dennis Bickers

In today’s world, the mega-church gets most of the attention. We are amazed when we hear that a church has five, ten, or even twenty thousand worshippers. However, the average church in the United States has about 75 people in worship. Many of the churches of The Rocky Mountain Region fit into this average size. Our Region has many small churches. During the week of April 7–11, hundreds of miles and almost 80 people from the Region’s small churches—and others that are not so small—met Rev. Dennis Bickers for the *Healthy Small Church Workshop*.

Rev. Bickers spoke to the people from around the Region about the advantages and the potential problems of small churches. Small churches have the benefits of community, opportunities to serve, quick communication, common experiences, and the fact that in most small churches people are more important than programs. The potential problems run along the same lines as the benefits. Small churches can have poor self esteem, lack of vision, be very exclusive, have limited resources, expect too much from a pastor, and have poorly trained lay leadership. These potential problems can lead to a church being unhealthy.

When a church has become unhealthy, there needs to be a few steps that will kick start a turn around. Rev. Bickers noted that churches need to identify the problem that is making them unhealthy. Once that is done, churches need to discern God’s vision for the future. He touched on how discernment



should be a practice in every church, not just small churches. Once the discernment process is complete, a church needs to commit to getting healthy over the “long haul.” He said “an unhealthy church did not get there overnight, it took years. To get that church healthy, it will take years.” Training needs to happen for both the pastor and lay leaders.

Conflict will rise in a church, but if it is managed well, it can keep the church healthy. Rev. Bickers noted that maintain health is always easier than regaining health, but health does not happen automatically. It needs to be worked at. He also said that God’s will is that churches be healthy, so work needs to be done to keep them as healthy as possible.

One of Rev. Bickers’ main points throughout his workshop was the question “Who are we (the church) here for?” Think about that. Who ARE we here for?

Rev. 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. Rev. Bickers is the author of *The Healthy Small Church*, among other books on bivocational ministers and small churches. Check out his website and blog at www.bivocationalministries.com.

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The Threshold Moved to New Home

As of Sunday, April 20, *The Threshold* has made its move to Highland Park Presbyterian Church. Sunday night's gathering went extremely well and was a meaningful beginning in our new worship space. There were 52 participants.

The Denver Presbytery made it financially possible to purchase movable chairs for the sanctuary. Those chairs arrived last week. The removal of 18 large wooden pews on Saturday has provided the needed flexibility for both congregations to share the space. The pews were loaded onto an 18-wheeler Saturday afternoon and delivered Monday morning to a church in Mississippi that had suffered damage from Hurricane Katrina. That church began a revival meeting on April 20th, enhanced by new/used pews from Denver.



Ashley Seaman is my Presbyterian colleague in this new venture. Three of Ashley's friends were with us Sunday evening. Each is active in the Presbyterian "New Church Development" movement within PC/USA. One is from Harrisburg, PA and two are from Louisville, KY. Their leadership among us was creative and inspiring. Rebecca Gayle from Montview Presbyterian and I provided musical leadership.

We ended worship Sunday evening with a circle dance inspired by Lahu Christians from a village in Northern Thailand. One participant made the comment yesterday, "That was so incredible, I danced a new church into a new beginning last night."

We've begun the necessary strategic thinking about reaching out and serving the Highland Park neighborhood. This is an exciting time.

Thank you for your vision and support for this innovative ministry.

*Brad Berglund
Pastor
The Threshold
Denver, CO*



Some Thoughts on Rice

Life is full of ironies. Some of the ironies are funny and others are tragic. For example, I heard a news report the other day that Cosco and some other stores are

limiting the amount of certain types of rice that people can buy. This rice is being imported from countries where it is their staple food source and there is a greater need for a domestic use. The problem is that this food source is also the key source of income in many of these countries. So whether to keep the rice to feed their people or sending it to us for financial profit, they are negatively affecting their country. The question is which part.

Another irony is that the day after I heard the rice report, I happened to have lunch with Art Ziemann, our regional director of Church World Service (CWS). CWS is one of our ABC partners in ministry. You probably know them better as CROP (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty) and their primary funding vehicle, the CROP Hunger Walk. The mission of CWS grew out of the need to respond to desperate situation in post-WWII Europe and has since evolved to the many needs around the world including providing clean, sanitary water and food in places like Darfu, Kenya and other places around the world.

Art shared with me that in his five state region (Colorado, New Mexico, Montana, Utah and Wyoming) there are about forty walks every year. His hope is that he can increase that number to 50 walks in the near future. One of the exciting parts of a CROP Walk is the opportunity for the local committee to designate up to 25% of the funds raised to a local food bank. One walk benefits the local community as well as the world community. I thought that perhaps we American Baptists could help Art achieve his goal in a couple of ways.

First, if your community currently has a CROP Walk encourage your congregation to become active participants in this significant event. Every member can be involved in some way for this type of event. Many can and should walk. Others can pledge financial support to those who are walking and others can provide assistance with the details of the walk. It is a chance for every member of your congregation to be involved in a significant local and international mission project.

Second, if your community does not currently host a CROP walk, contact Art (phone 303-455-5765 or aziemann@churchworldservice.org) about the possibility of doing so in the future. Art will be happy to visit with you and share the details of what's involved. It is just one small way in which we can be the hands and feet of Jesus to the world we live in.

*In Christ,
Steve Van O
ABCRM Executive Minister*

Colorado ABWM to Hold Annual Conference at Calvary Baptist Church in Denver

Women and high school girls of Colorado, have you considered joining the American Baptist Women Ministries in this state? This year's annual conference would be a wonderful time for you to see what ABWM is about and make connections with other women around the state.

The conference is going to be held at Calvary Baptist Church in Denver, CO June 13-15. The theme of the state conference will be ***Come to the Edge: Break the Chains***. Come hear some of the most prominent Christian Women leaders in our denomination.



Rev. Lauran Bethell is one of International Ministries' global consultants. She helped create the New Life Center, a residence for young women sold into prostitution in

Thailand. She left Thailand and relocated to the Czech Republic in 2000 and help form Project Hope, a ministry to women there who often have been tricked or sold into sex slavery.



Estela Schweissing is coming in from the Bahamas. (Her husband, Daniel, is from the Denver area.) She works through the Mission Baptist Consortium of Churches to serve Haitian immigrant women and children at risk for human trafficking. Many of the women who make it to the Bahamas have no skills and little schooling. She helps them learn basic sewing, from how to use scissors and cut a line in fabric to making a piece of clothing. If the refugees can learn to sew well, they have a market for school uniforms for Haitian children.

Alicia Luquin (picture not available) is the ABWM's Western Section

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Coordinator. She writes articles for the *Leader's Reader*. She uses scripture to applaud the good works she sees women doing as she travels the western states.



Rev. Mary Hulst, the ABCUSA President, will be leading the Bible study throughout the weekend. Mary is the Pastor Emeritus at Calvary Baptist Church.

She currently resides in the Denver area.

Come, bring your friends, and enjoy the fellowship with other women from around Colorado. Workshops will be available on Saturday for everyone. Craft workshops will include corsages, lead by Marie Baker, and beading, lead by Nancy Susman. Other workshops will include drama (Irish Brophy), computers (Estelle Torphy and Yvonne Whisenhunt), Mission in Action (Beth Kieft and Karen Pinkham), signing (Marty Taylor), and *Hands and Words are Not for Hurting* (Rita Berglund and Carol Weale).

Saturday night, instead of the traditional Talent Show, there will be a Drama Night. You should bring your favorite skit to share with the group. Sunday morning will be the culmination of the weekend with communion in the chapel at Calvary Baptist followed by worship with the Calvary congregation where our Women's choir will join Calvary's Women's choir for all to enjoy.

The registration deadline is **May 10, 2008**. You can find the registration form on the ABCRM website at <http://www.abcrm.org/ministries/women.htm>. The registration form, with fees and meal reservations with the amount you need to pay need to be sent to the registrar, Estelle Torphy, before May 10. Estelle's ad-



dress is 890 Union Ave, Boulder, CO 80304.

Parents and high school girls, a special time for high school girls will be held Friday night after dinner with Lauran Bethell and Estela Schweissing. The women will discuss their lives as missionaries and the *Break the Chains* project that the ABWM is doing this year. As for the events on Saturday, a special time of community outreach has been planned along with a special time of fellowship and fun away from the women's workshops. *Girls need to send in a registration form with payment for meals, but do not need to include the registration fee*. Girls do need to bring an extra \$15 in case a decision is made to attend an event (i.e. museum, zoo, etc) that costs money. Girls also need to bring spending money if they would like. Host houses will be available for girls to stay at together to cut costs.

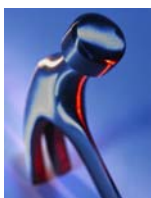
All events for the women, and girls on Friday, will be held at Calvary Baptist Church in Denver. Calvary is located at the corner of Hampden and Monaco in South Denver, or 6500 Girard Ave. ([Click here for Google map](#)) Hotel rooms are reserved for this conference at the Four Points by Sheraton at 6363 E Hampden Ave. (2 blocks from the church.)

Bring comfortable clothes and shoes. Dress in layers, some rooms are warmer or cooler than others. Pack something purple to wear on Saturday. There will be refreshments at the breaks and there are water fountains in the church building but you might want to pack your own water bottle.

Come to worship, learn and fellowship together!

Habitat for Humanity Home Improvement Outlet Needs Volunteers Daily

Habitat for Humanity Home Improvement Outlet in Wheat Ridge is looking for volunteers to help. The Outlet sells new and used donated building materials, appliances and furniture to benefit Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver.



The store has been extremely successful as a fundraiser for Habitat. They are particularly in need of volunteers willing

to run the cash register who are able to volunteer for one 4-5 hour shift weekly. They are also in need of help on the warehouse floor, especially on weekday afternoons from 2:00-5:00 or 6:00 p.m.

If you are over 16 years of age and would like to volunteer, call Alice Goble at 303-996-5468 or email her at alice@habitatmetrodenver.org. More information about volunteering for Habitat Outlets can be found online at www.habitatoutlet.org. They are also in need of your donations of new and used building materials, appliances, tools, hardware, light fixtures, plumbing, electrical items and furniture. To donate call 303-421-5300.

*Alice Goble
Volunteer Coordinator
Habitat for Humanity
Outlet Stores*

“True Light Voices of Praise” Performs in Scottsbluff, NE with Inspirational Songs



Scottsbluff Berean Bible Church (in Nebraska) has asked the “True Light Voices of Praise” to come and bless them with a night of spirit-led music. “True Light” is a 40 member African-American Gospel singing group based out of Denver, CO under the leadership of Pastor William Golson. Pastor Golson began and planted True Light Baptist Church 20 years ago in Denver beginning in a hotel, then to a storefront, and finally to a beautiful, permanent facility on 4 acres in Denver.

When asked about what inspired the idea of inviting the “Voices of Praise” the Pastor of Scottsbluff Berean Bible Church, Scott Clark said, “I was working in Denver 2 years ago and I like to visit various churches when I am out of town to see how they minister on Sunday mornings. True Light was nearby so I dropped in. The morning service began with 45 minutes of praise in songs. The exuberant, soul-suspending, rhythm of their actions and sincere praise brought me to tears. When I left that day I thought, ‘Man, I needed that!’” That was the first time Pastor Scott had contact with the Denver church which was the grass-root premise of a future invitation. “It was at that point I thought that our people back home need to hear this. The people of our valley need this kind of soul-reaching music that draws them to Jesus,” Clark said.

Therefore, 2 years later, and 6 months after Clark became the new pastor of the Scottsbluff Berean Church (October 2007), he made a trip with his family

back to Denver to see if the praise group still existed and if they would be interested in coming to Scottsbluff. It not only existed, it grew even larger. “The first time I went there, there were about 20 members singing, by the second trip it had doubled. These 40 people sounded like a volume of 200 and I’m not embellishing. I was blown away all over again by their joy, their volume, and their exuberant rhythm. My wife Lynda and I met with Pastor Golson and asked if there was any way possible they would consider coming to our Valley and sing for us. I told him I couldn’t promise him any amount of money, but we would take a love offering to hopefully cover travel expenses and their time.”

Pastor Golson didn’t look away or ponder at all. His immediate response was, “We would be happy to come and bless your people with our music.” Needless to say Scott was ecstatic and now after negotiating travel options and getting a schedule nailed down, the “True Light Voices of Praise” will be in Scottsbluff on May 3rd, Saturday evening.

Location: Scottsbluff Berean Bible Church corner of 16th and K, by Westmoor Elementary. Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m. Amount: Love Offering. Doors open at 5:00 p.m. Contact: Pastor Scott or John at 308-632-8934.

*William T. Golson, Jr.
Senior Pastor
True Light Baptist Church
Denver, CO*

Short Term Mission Opportunity

Black Hills of South Dakota – August 2-10,2008



The American Baptist Churches of Nebraska and the Dakotas have teamed up in each of the last seven years to minister at the annual gathering of over 400,000 people in Sturgis, SD for Bike Week. (Attendance in 2007 was estimated at 507,000.)

Let us celebrate with these new members of God's family and of the churches of this Region.

First Baptist Church

Sterling, CO:

- Vinny Baray
- Lorrie Bolton
- Sarah Bolton
- Vicki Frick
- Ryan Frick
- Christian Genereux
- Jesse Genereux
- Michelle Wallett
- Mileena Wallett

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



The ABC Emergency Services Center was created in the basement of the First Baptist Church of the Northern Hills in Deadwood to help those who became stranded due to injury, abandonment, or mechanical breakdown. Many of those we help are referred to us by law enforcement, hospitals or social services agencies. Posters and brochures also help many find us for

help. Volunteers from American Baptist churches around the country spend all or part of the week helping, feeding, transporting, and counseling the dozens of individuals who come to the ESC for assistance.

Throughout the week calls come in at all hours of the day and night from churches, police and rescue workers, and individuals, wanting us to help men, women, and children in need. Volunteers don't need to be motorcyclists, but ought to have a heart for evangelism. We have discovered that it is helpful if we have more women volunteers due to the large percentage of women and children that we end up assisting. If you can come for all or part of the week we can find a job for you!



Interested in Sturgis Rally Ministry 2008?

- ◆ The ABC Emergency Services Center will be open August 2-10.
- ◆ Sleeping space is provided. Most bring an air mattress or a cot.
- ◆ RVers will be provided with space to set up camp.
- ◆ This mission project is designed for adults. High school students will be permitted when accompanied by a parent.
- ◆ Followup on those ministered to will be coordinated by contacts in ABC regions around the country.
- ◆ Each participant is asked to contribute \$100 toward the cost of this project. Local churches are encouraged to assist their participating members in raising this amount. Contributions may be made through ABC Nebraska and ABC Dakotas.

For more information, visit www.SturgisAid.com or contact Rev. Steve Bilts



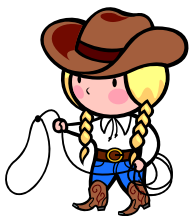
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National Day of Prayer is Thursday, May 1, 2008.

Please pray for our country, our leaders, and our service men and women. Also, please pray for this Region, the Region leadership, your local church and your local church leaders.

Each Thursday, from now until the national election in November, you are encouraged to pray for the leaders of this country.

It's Roundup Time at Laramie First Baptist!



June 6-7, is the annual Wyoming ABWM State Conference. The theme of the conference will be the national theme of **“Come to the Edge.”**

Two missionaries, **Estela Schweissing** and **Rakmi Shaiza**, will be keynote speakers. Estela Schweissing is an ABC missionary to the Bahamas. Rakmi is a seminary student from India currently working at Bethel Neighborhood Center in Kansas City. She will bring updates from the ABC Center, plus news of the work she does with the Chingrikon Women's Educational Organization in Manipur, India. Rakmi will bring handicrafts from India for sale to ladies attending the conference.

Registration will begin at 1:00 p.m. at First Baptist Church, located at 1517 E. Canby St. Laramie, WY.

([Click here for Google map](#)) The conference will end at 3:00 p.m. Saturday. Registration and meals is \$29. A block of rooms has been reserved at Laramie's Comfort Inn, 3420 Grand Ave. The cost of the rooms is \$98.99, which includes taxes and a full breakfast buffet. Ladies must make their own reservations by calling Comfort Inn by **May 22** at 307-721-8856. Child care will be available at the conference free of charge.

There will be music, Bible study, crafts, fellowship, food, and prayer! We urge **all** Wyoming ladies to make plans to join in the "Roundup!"

Mary M. Burman
Laramie, WY



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To reach the world with the
LOVE of Jesus Christ!*

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