

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

Missions Where We Live

Missions, as we traditionally think, is going to foreign countries to share the saving Gospel message of Jesus Christ with those cultures that have heard little or nothing about Jesus and why He came. American Baptists were in the vanguard of the mission movement in America when Adoniram Judson, having been sent to India by the Congregationalists, determined during that long voyage that he could not accept their view of infant baptism. Thus, Baptists were drug into the mission field when they discovered their first missionary was already there.

The story of the Judsons moving on to Burma and the years of toil before celebrating even their first convert are familiar to us all. Much less known than the Judsons were George and Sarah Boardman who came to Burma some 20 years after the Judsons. The Boardmans began a fruitful work with the Karens, a hill tribe people. The ministry that was begun by these pioneer missionaries in the early 1800's has thrived to this day despite the fact that it has been more than 40 years since foreign missionaries were expelled from Burma. Today nearly 9% of the people are Christian despite persecution from an oppressive military rule that has forced many Christians to flee the country and many more have been tortured and killed for their faith.

American Baptists have continued to work extensively with the Karens and other Burmese Christians in the hill country of Thailand and through them to those Christians still in what is now Myanmar.

So what does this brief history of a significant part of our mission heritage have to do with “**Missions where we live?**” The fact is that more and more immigrants are coming to America to find a better life. It is no longer necessary for us to only go overseas to minister to other cultures. Right here in our own Region, specifically in the area of east Denver and Aurora, there are a growing number of Karen refugees. These are people whose ancestors were brought to Christ beginning with the Boardmans and are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Many come with little more than the limited goods they can carry. They have fled for their lives from Burma and some have spent months or years in refugee camps. While there are government programs that are designed to help them get settled and started, those programs are not enough.

Imagine living a life in hill country with no plumbing facilities, cooking on an outdoor fire, and raising children in the context of a village “family” and suddenly faced with indoor plumbing, a gas or electric stove, and jobs that require skills never thought of in tribal life.

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News From Daniel & Estela Schweissing American Baptist Missionaries in the Bahamas

We are pleased to announce that Estela will be visiting Colorado and Wyoming during the month of June. She'll be arriving in Denver on May 29th and returning to the Bahamas on June 19th. During that time she will be speaking at both the Colorado and Wyoming ABW conferences as well as a number of ABCRM churches. For those who are in the area and would like to hear her speak, we have enclosed her schedule below. She looks forward to meeting you.

Estela's Schedule

- May 31* Crossroads Baptist Church—Northglenn, CO
children's evening service
- June 1* Crossroads Baptist Church—Northglenn, CO
Children 9:30 & 11:00
Brown Bag Lunch
- June 6-7* Wyoming ABWM Conference—First Baptist, Laramie, WY
- June 8* First Baptist, Glenrock, WY
- June 9* Calvary Baptist, Cheyenne, WY
- June 13-14* Colorado ABWM Conference—Calvary Baptist, Denver, CO
- June 15* True Light Baptist Church, Denver, CO
- June 16* Quaker Ridge Camp (for campers and staff only)

For specific service times, you should contact the host church or Rich Schweissing at RSchweissing@aol.com.

Financial Support:

You can support our ministry by sending a check designated for "the ongoing support of Dan and Estela Schweissing in the Bahamas" to:

American Baptist International Ministries
c/o Missionary Partnership Teams
P.O. Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851

You can also donate at online at http://www.internationalministries.org/missionary/daniel_and_estela_schweissing



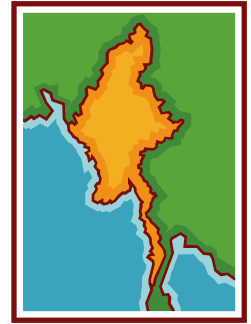
Thank you! As always, we greatly appreciate your continued prayers and financial support, both of which make our ministry possible.

*Serving Christ in the Bahamas,
Daniel and Estela Schweissing*

Missions Where We Live

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Deal with all this while struggling with an incomprehensible language. Imagine finding oneself in jail for child neglect because the parent went off for work leaving children supervised by the community as it was done in the tribe. Imagine the fear in that jail given the oppressive nature of the government where they came from.



This just touches the surface of problems faced by these people, our brothers and sisters in Christ. A small core of volunteer groups work with these people the best they can helping them through the maze of government paperwork to get the aid that is available and to address needs not provided by the government.

Isn't it time that we as American Baptists step up to this need?

Opportunities abound. Over the next few months we will publicize specific ways that you can help. Some will require attention from those churches near the Denver area, but other needs can be answered by any across the Region. Please begin to pray now about how God is calling you to be a missionary here at home.

*Rich Schweissing
President
ABCRM*



Lending a Hand in Nicaragua

I had the privilege of going on a mission trip to Nicaragua sponsored by ABCRM this past April. The trip was led by Pastor John Turnage of Loveland and consisted of eight other members from Colorado ABC churches, including FBC Loveland, Calvary in Denver, FBC Colorado Springs, and my own church, American Baptist Church in Fort Collins.



made a large dent in the task of finishing the cement block and concrete beam walls. Better yet, we got to know our fellow Nicaraguan church member workers. Language was never a problem. Some in the group were bilingual and the rest of us found ways to communicate.

The three ladies in the group had a successful Bible school with the help of a wonderful lady named Alice from the Bluefield's Church and Pastor Turnage, both of whom are bilingual. When they weren't putting on the Bible school, the women helped with the construction.

The purpose of the trip was to help ABC missionaries Vital and Ketly Pierre, and their church, Bethel Baptist in Bluefields, with the construction of a multi-purpose building at a site in the town of Kukra Hill, where Bethel Baptist planted a new church in January 2007. Kukra Hill is about 17 miles north of Bluefields on the Caribbean Coast and accessible by boat on the Rio Escondido River.

My fondest memory of the trip was the rapport I experienced with my fellow team members and the Nicaraguan people. Our team meshed very well together and I found the Nicaraguans to be a very warm, friendly and inviting people. I believe that God will use the work we did and relationships we made to foster His purposes in Nicaragua. When the airplane wheels lifted off the tarmac at Managua on the trip home, a large part of me did not want to leave.

The second purpose was to put on a Bible study for the children of the Kukra Hill Church and the community. Another important goal was to develop relationships with our missionaries, the parishioners of the Bluefields and Kukra Hill churches, and the Nicaraguan people.

*Bruce Nuttall
American Baptist Church
Fort Collins, CO*

It was hot and humid, and the work of masonry construction was hard and not the sort of work any of us was used to doing on a regular basis, but very rewarding. We



International Ministries Sends Relief Grant After China Earthquake

American Baptist International Ministries has sent a \$5,000 grant to their partner, The Amity Foundation, for immediate relief efforts, after one of the strongest earthquakes to strike China in decades happened Monday, May 12, leaving thousands dead and more missing.

been devastated recently by a cyclone.

Chan. "Amity is a trusted partner, with good relationships with the churches and the government. They are playing a crucial role in helping victims and will need our continued financial support to be most effective."

According to news media reports, more than 15,000 people are estimated to have died when the earthquake, which measured 7.9 in magnitude, struck in Sichuan province, an area in Southwestern China. The province is very near a border with Myanmar, which has

The grant was provided through the American Baptist World Relief Office with One Great Hour of Sharing funds. Ben Chan, area director for East Asia for International Ministries, said much more will be needed.

American Baptists wishing to support ongoing China efforts can do so through their church's monthly report of mission support, designating contributions "OGHS-China Earthquake." For online contributions, go to the give now option available at www.abc-oghs.org/give.

"We are very grateful for this initial response, which will support the Amity Foundation, who is providing more than \$140,000 in immediate aid, such as clean water, food, medicine and shelter on the ground for those affected," said

American Baptist News Service



2008 ABCRM Bulgaria Missions Team is Ready to Go!

Thanks to in-country planning by ABC-IM Bulgaria missionaries Tom and Terry Myers, a 6-person mission team from Colorado and Wyoming ABC churches is set to go on the June 19-30 ABCRM Bulgaria Mission Experiences trip. Shown in the photo L-R are mission team members Karla Davis (First Baptist-Laramie), Sherry Wilson (First Baptist-Laramie), Kent Oakes (Calvary Baptist-Denver), mission trip leader Kerry Hassler (First Baptist-Boulder), and Dwight and Aladine Neuenschwander (First Baptist-Boulder). Also shown on the right are Betty and Bill Moseley, parents of Terry Myers and the gracious hosts of the ABCRM Bulgaria mission team's "pre-trip meeting" held on May 24 at American Baptist in Ft. Collins.



The Bulgaria mission team will first stay in Sofia from June 20-22 to meet Tom and Terry and talk with them about their Bulgaria ministries. They also meet Pastor Teddy Oprenov of the Sofia Evangelical Baptist Church (the Myers family home church in Bulgaria), and then tour the new SEBC church facility currently being built. After attending Sunday morning services at the current SEBC location, the mission team will help conduct morning Vacation Bible School classes and fun activities for Bulgarian children from ages 4-15 at the Guliantzi Baptist Church in northern Bulgaria from June 23-26. During the afternoons, the team will improve the grounds surrounding the Guliantzi Baptist Church by spreading gravel and making other improvements.

On Friday, June 27, the team will go to the nearby city of Pleven to make improvements to playground equipment at an orphanage for Bulgarian children of primary school age. The last days of the mission trip will be spent touring the historic Bulgarian city of Veliko Turnovo before returning to Sofia to attend Sunday services at the Sofia Baptist Church.

To pay for the cost of materials for the June 19-30 Bulgaria Missions Experience projects, ABCRM has provided \$4400 to the Myers for use in buying project materials prior to the mission team's arrival on June 20. These ABCRM funds are part of the total \$25,000 funds designated in the 2008 ABCRM budget for in-country project costs for the 2008 ABCRM mission trips to Thailand, Nicaragua, Cambodia, and Bulgaria.

You may read about the experiences of the ABCRM Bulgaria mission team during their June 19-30 trip by reading updates posted on the "ABCRM Missions Experiences" blog at <http://abcrmissionexperiences.blogspot.com/>. Please keep the Bulgaria mission team members who have answered the challenge of "Been Called? Go!" in your thoughts and prayers!

Kerry Hassler
Bulgaria Mission Team
Leader



Dr. Paul M. Martin Elected Interim President of American Baptist Seminary of the West (ABSW)

The Rev. Dr. Paul M. Martin, retired Pastor of the Macedonia Baptist Church of Denver and Interim Pastor of the Zion Hill Baptist Church of Los Angeles has been elected by the Board of Trustees of the American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkeley California to be it's Interim President effective June 15, 2008.

Dr. Martin will follow his dear friend, Dr. Keith A. Russell who retired as the President of the Seminary after 11 years to become the Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at New York Theological Seminary in the city of New York.

Dr. Martin will serve the ABSW until a permanent President is hired.

There has been a long association between Dr. Martin and the seminary dating back to his involvement as the first African American President of the Region of American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains. Also, Dr. Martin has a keen interest in helping to prepare men and women for the Christian Ministry in a time when it is imperative to have seminary prepared and trained clergy as members of the pastorate in all of our churches.

Dr. Martin is very proud of the fact that throughout his own ministry there have been 35 men and women who have earned degrees from colleges and seminaries across this country and who are now giving wonderful leadership to churches and religious institutions across the country.

The American Baptist Seminary of the West is a very prestigious institution and ranks among one of the best in the nation. In Colorado there are several graduates of this distinguished institution.

You may contact Dr. Martin by email to: marpmartin@aol.com.

ABSW News Release

A Call to Compassion

In the face of the tragedies in Burma and China, the global food crisis, the impact of refugee resettlement upon local churches, the growing financial problems facing US families, and the continuing struggles faced in rebuilding the Gulf Coast, we are asking American Baptist congregations to declare the first Sunday of each month from June – December 2008 as Compassion Sunday.



On these Sundays, we call upon all American Baptists to show our solidarity with those who suffer as we remember them in prayer and commit ourselves to respond in tangible ways to their suffering as the hands and feet of Christ. For some this will lead to fasting and contributing the money normally spent on the meal to local efforts such as food pantries. For many it will mean contributing all or a portion of their income tax return for relief efforts. For others it will mean joining the next ABC build on the Gulf Coast as a volunteer.

Compassion Sunday builds upon our tradition of receiving a deacon's offering for the relief of those in need as we gather around the table of our Lord. At this table we recall that we are one with Christians of every country and every circumstance through our common faith in Christ Jesus, from the person in the pew next to us to the person farthest from our reach.

In the face of a great famine affecting the church in Jerusalem, Paul appealed to the church in Corinth to support relief efforts there. He reminded them: "You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God; for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others." - 2 Corinthians 9:11-13

Our hope is that through our worship and prayers on these Compassion Sundays we will realize more fully our unity and our following of Jesus' way of radical love. American Baptists have always been marked by our sacrificial following of Christ in response to the needs of others.

To assist you, we have provided a downloadable litany of prayer that may be used each Sunday as a worship resource. Go to <http://www.abc-usa.org/documents/WelcomeMessages/CompLitany1.pdf> for the litany.

Our prayer is that through this spiritual exercise we will more fully realize the meaning of the table of our Lord and will be drawn into a deeper embrace of our discipleship and our neighbor.

In Christ for the body of Christ,
A. Roy Medley
General Secretary ABCUSA
Aids and F. Wright-Riggins, III
Executive Director of ABC-NM
Reid Trulson
Executive Director of ABC-IM
Sumner Grant
Executive Director of ABC MMBB

Attention Prayer Warriors!

We are forming a prayer team for the **2008 Annual Gathering** that will be held in Cheyenne, WY, October 17-18. If you would like to join us in praying for this event, please e-mail Gina Gibson (prayer4ce@aol.com).

We will have current prayer guides for the event available upon request.

Gina Gibson
FBC Cheyenne



Remember that **camp registrations**, for all camps, are due soon. Make sure to register now to make sure your children get to go.

Make sure to **save the date** of July, 13, 2008 for Rev. Steve VanOstran's Installation service. The service will be at Crossroads Church in Northglenn, CO at 4:00 pm. There will be a reception for you to meet and greet Steve and his family after the service.

It's not too late to send in your churches **Annual Report**. We are still accepting them. Please send them in as soon as possible. If you need another copy or if you have any questions about the report, contact Alyce at the Region office at 303-988-3900 or by email at akeys@abcrn.org.

Call to Prayer for American Baptist Youth Gathering

National Ministries, sponsor of the upcoming National Gathering of American Baptist Youth, encourages American Baptists to support this vital ministry—before, during and after the event—through “40 Days of Prayer for MtW.”



Hundreds of youth and youth ministry workers are expected at the gathering, “MtW: More Than a Week” in Estes Park, CO, July 5-11. The prayer effort launches Sunday, June 8, and concludes Thursday, July 17.

A collection of daily devotions leading to prayers for the youth and the workers who will attend the gathering is available for download from National Ministries’ Web site (see below), along with a bulletin insert to promote the effort in Sunday worship.

Prayers for the planning team and leadership as well as guest speakers and workshop leaders are also encouraged. More specifically, pray:

- For wisdom and diligence for those preparing the event.
- That each person will experience the presence of God and leave a changed person.
- That after youth go home, they will make room, even in the midst of living at warp speed, for the spiritual dimensions of life.
- That the experience will last “More Than a Week”—rather, for a lifetime!

“More Than a Week”—focused on leadership development, relationship building and social transformation—will equip youth for a life of faith, leading them to do God’s transformative work in a world crying out for Jesus: “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Philippians 3:12-14).

Encourage support of “40 Days of Prayer for MtW” in your congregation with the bulletin insert suitable for Sunday worship. Download the insert and the daily devotions and prayers at www.nationalministries.org or www.morethanaweek.org.

National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA has been transforming the lives of persons of all ages since its founding in 1832 as the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

American Baptist News Service

Continental Divide Disaster Behavioral Health Conference

BRIDGING THE **DIVIDE** BETWEEN PRACTITIONERS & SCIENTISTS

July 7-10, 2008
Marriott Hotel, Colorado Springs, CO

This conference is a high level governmental professional conference bringing together civilian and military scientists and practitioners (including clergy, chaplains, and therapists) to share knowledge and resources and learn skills to effectively respond to large-scale disasters. Embedded will be a pandemic flu tabletop exercise.

For Whom:

Civilian and military disaster mental health responders and therapists, researchers, clergy, first-responders, scientists, chaplains, students and any interested persons. No prerequisites required! CEUs provided and seminary MA/CO background hours authorized.



When: July 7

Pre-Conference: Skill training sessions for disaster responders. There will be 4 themes. The themes include interagency cooperation, behavioral health response, research and systems, and recovery and resilience. The 30+ speakers will including Denver Seminary’s **Drs. Jan McCormack & Naomi Paget**.

Costs and Registration:

Early bird registration by June 6. Half price for students! For information and registration go to: <http://www.cddbhc.com>

Or contact Dr. Jan McCormack jan.mccormack@denverserinary.edu

Co-sponsors:

1. The Colorado Dept of Human Services Division of Mental Health
2. The University of Colorado’s Trauma, Health and Hazards Center
3. The US Northern Command Office of the Surgeon General (Homeland Defense)

Myanmar Baptists on Front Lines of Cyclone Relief, Housing Thousands

The evening of Friday May 2, 2008 started out like normal for the residents of Yangon. But by the time Rev. KD Tu Lum, General Secretary of the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC), finished his dinner an unusually strong wind was shaking the roof of his residence in the historic compound of the MBC.



By 10 pm the winds had increased to hurricane strength with accompanying heavy rains. Within a few hours roofs were being ripped off of buildings. Huge raintrees and century-old banyans were crashing down across the streets and buildings of Yangon, including Rev. Tu Lum's own home. Cyclone Nargis had arrived without warning for most of the people of Myanmar.

Meanwhile, along the Irrawaddy Delta to the south of Yangon, Nargis had pushed a 12-foot tidal wave an estimated 45 miles into the heavily populated region. At least 100,000 persons perished with many times more being left homeless without access to food or clean water.

The Aftermath

By Sunday May 4, officials of the MBC were not only picking up pieces of their own lives, but also faced the challenge of providing an urgent response to hundreds of thousands of people affected by the storm.



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

The MBC—which traces its roots directly to the mission of Adoniram and Ann Judson in the country in 1813—is made up of approximately 2 million members among 20 languages and regional conventions. Despite being in an overwhelmingly Buddhist country, Myanmar is home to one of the largest Baptist populations in the world, according to figures kept by the Baptist World Alliance.

Among an array of diverse ministries, the MBC operates the Christian Social Service and Development Department (CSSDD), its own relief and development arm. The CSSDD coordinates and equips various types of holistic ministry throughout Myanmar.



The Initial Response

Even through Sunday, the streets of Yangon were blocked with downed trees, power lines and other debris. The first meeting of the convention staff after the storm took place around noon on Monday, May 5 although many staffers were still not able to reach the office compound.

On Tuesday, the MBC decided to form a central response committee in coordination with the leadership of affected Baptist conventions. As the affected region lacks infrastructure and because fuel for rescue and relief efforts was in short supply, the MBC coordinated the purchase of diesel for relief boats to ship emergency food rations, such as rice, noodles, biscuits, and bottled water, throughout the delta. It was also determined that an enormous area of farmland in Myanmar's major rice production region had been inundated with salt water, currently leaving only one third of the cropping area still capable

of producing the staple.

The convention staff met again on Friday May 9 to plan the establishment of refugee camps. By May 12, 20 facilities were set up, and by May 16, roughly 31 camps had been established serving 10,000 to 12,000 people. All of the camps are managed in conjunction with the Karen and Pwo Karen Baptist Conventions and the Myanmar Baptist Churches Union. MBC representatives have also reported that local authorities have set up refugee camps in the same region with both parties seeking to coordinate relief efforts.

The current focus of the MBC and its partners is on immediate relief response. The entire church has turned its focus and full energy to assisting the victims of this devastating event. With very little outside help, they have risen to the challenge in a remarkable way.

The convention and its partners are also planning long-term assistance to enable affected persons to begin rebuilding their lives. The convention is also faced with its own recovery process, as the heavily damaged MBC office and compound requires extensive repairs.



American Baptists wishing to support ongoing Myanmar efforts can do so through their church's monthly report of mission support, designating contributions "OGHS-Myanmar Cyclone" or at <http://www.abc-oghs.org/>.

This story was provided by personnel working with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and American Baptist International Ministries to deliver financial aid and assess ongoing needs. The name of the author is withheld for security reasons.

Harpist Greg Buchanan In Concert



First Baptist Church in Cheyenne, WY is hosting Harpist Greg Buchanan in concert on June 20, 2008 at 7:00 pm. First Baptist is located at 1800 E. Pershing Blvd. For more information call 307-632-9334.

If you would like your churches events advertised in the RMAB, please send an email with information to Jessica Fischer, ABCRM Communication Specialist at jfischer@abcrm.org, or call Jessica at 303-988-3900.

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*Discover your PASSION!
Realize your MISSION!
To reach the world with the
LOVE of Jesus Christ!*

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