

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

ABC Missionary Karen Smith Speaks in the Region

“Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul.” - Psalm 142:4

Psalm 142 was the theme shared by Karen Smith as she spoke to audiences in the Rocky Mountain Region. As the Director of the New Life Center in Chiang Mai, Thailand, Karen oversees the care of approximately 110 young girls who have been traumatized even as pre-teens by labor exploitation. She explained that as an emerging economy Thailand is desperate for labor. Further, in that culture, while it is important for boys to be educated, the economic burdens of the family are placed on the girls.

In such conditions it is easy for unscrupulous “employers” in agriculture, construction, fisheries, and, yes, the sex trade industry, to exploit girls at a very early age. Usually the families are not aware of the plight of their daughters having been informed of the “good” conditions under which they will be working. This general theme was woven into every message that Karen brought along with specific stories about some of the girls who have come to the New Life Center.

In addition to providing education and dealing with the emotional trauma the girls have suffered before coming to the New Life Center, a strong emphasis is put on sharing the love of Jesus Christ with the girls. Karen reported that this past spring 24 girls accepted Jesus as their Savior and followed him in baptism.

The credibility of the work of the New Life Center is clear when one notes that Thailand is governed by a Buddhist government and yet officials work closely with the Center to help these girls even knowing that they will be exposed to Christianity.

Karen Smith spoke at Audubon Heights Baptist and First Baptist in Colorado Springs before heading north to Cheyenne to speak at the Annual Gathering. Her message fit perfectly with the “Break the Chains” theme that has been the focus of both the Colorado and the Wyoming ABW Ministries. Because of that, she was the featured after dinner speaker on Friday night as this dinner is traditionally hosted by the women.

[Continued on page 5](#)

What’s in this RMAB?

ABCRM Gathers Together to Fellowship, Worship, Learn, and Do Business
[Page 2](#)

Lessons From a Lapel Pin
[Page 4](#)

ABCRM Mission Committee Announces Mission Experiences for 2009
[Page 5](#)

American Indian Studies Colloquium at Bacone College
[Page 5](#)

November 21, 2008 is the Deadline to Sign up for the February 2009 Mission Experience to Thailand
[Page 6](#)



A shelter for young tribal women in northern Thailand

ABCRM Gathers Together to Fellowship, Worship, Learn, and Do Business



First Baptist Church of Cheyenne, WY graciously welcomed ABCRM into their church for the 2008 Annual Gathering October 17-18. The theme this year was “Healthy Congregations -Being the Body of Christ From Here to the Ends of the Earth.”



The Gathering actually started with the Pre-Gathering workshop on Thursday, October 16. Rev. Harry Riggs, of First Baptist Church, Lincoln,

NE, (pictured above) conducted the workshop called *Being an Acts 2:42-47 Church*. This workshop focused on how the local church can reach the community around the church.

Thursday night was the Annual Clergy Appreciation Dinner. Clergy from around the Region gathered together to eat, meet, and recognize the

new pastors, interim pastors, and retiring pastors of the Region. Christian comedian Bob Smiley (right) performed for the group. He uses his comedy to reach out and teach the Gospel of Christ.

Friday morning Rev. Riggs opened the session with a powerful Bible study and worship. The first business session of the Gathering commenced with Steve Van Ostran and Rich Schweissing giving their year end reports. You can find both these reports, along with all the other reports from the Gathering at <http://www.abcrm.org/about/annualreports.htm>.

Michelle Birdsall, from National Ministries, presented informational session on the structure change of ABC-USA. The PowerPoint presentation used is available for your viewing at http://www.abcrm.org/news_archives/2008/ABCUSAStructure.ppt.

The workshops after lunch help keep the theme of *Healthy Congregations* flowing through the Gathering. The workshops highlighted some activities and ministries that local churches could adopt to reach out to the community.

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- *ABC Structure Change*—Steve



Van Ostran and Michelle Birdsall

- *The Power of Missions—Living Out the Gospel*—John Turnage, Pastor of FBC Loveland, CO

- *Influence, Impact, Engage: The Power of a Church on Mission*—Kim Skattum, Pastor of Crossroads Church, Northglenn, CO
- *Coming to the Aid of Military Families*—Carol Carr, Associate Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Cheyenne, WY
- *Going Into All the World—At Home*—John Sittner, Missions Pastor of Crossroads Church, Northglenn, CO

During the second business session, after the workshops, ABCRM Board members rotating off were recognized. The Nominating Committee announced the slate for new Board members and the new members were voted in unanimously. You can find the new Board at <http://www.abcrm.org/about/board.htm>.

The one issue on the table at the meeting was a recommendation by the ABCRM Board that the ABCRM continue a relationship with Colorado Council of Churches with the following provisions:

- *Any future policy statement or action of the CCC which requires a vote of the Executive Minister will be submitted to the ABCRM Executive Committee for their action.*

[Continued on page 3](#)



ABCRM Gathers

Continued from page 2

- In considering future actions, the ABCRM Executive Committee will consider the impact of these decisions on the life of the local congregations that comprise ABCRM.

A vote was taken and the recommendation passed with zero no votes and one abstention. You can find the full recommendation with the *Explanation of the Basis of the Recommendation* on the ABCRM website at <http://www.abcrm.org>.

Friday evening, ABW Ministries hosted the Gathering Banquet. Jessica Fischer sang *Orphans of God* and Karen Smith spoke about the Break the Chains effort and the New Life Center in Chiang Mai, Thailand (*see related story on page 1*).

After dinner, everyone gathered in the FBC sanctuary for a worship service. The Cheyenne FBC praise band, *Messengers of Hope*, led the congregation in singing. Rev. Dr. Steve Van Ostran then led the congregation in prayer of Lament and Hope for Cheyenne FBC. This was for healing to fall upon the church following the death of Senior Pastor Lyn King on September 23.

A call had been put out before the Gathering for welcome baskets for the Karen refugees (*right*). Many people from across the Region brought baskets and gifts to put in the baskets to the Gathering. John Sittner, Mission Pastor of Crossroads Church in Northglenn, presented the baskets and gave a blessing over them. They will be used for Karen families that come in to the local area.

Rev. Dr. Steve Van Ostran was affirmed with a reading lead by Rev. Kim Skattum, who was co-chair of the Executive Minister Search Committee (*the affirmation is pictured at the bottom of the page*). Steve then gave the message “*Shall We Look for Another.*”

Saturday, Rev. Harry Riggs again opened the day with a



powerful and meaningful worship time. The congregation then split up for the second session of workshops.

- *It's as Easy as ABC*—Bill Brackett, Member of Calvary Baptist Church, Denver, CO
- *The Power of Mission—Creating Vision and Healing*—John Turnage, Pastor of FBC Loveland, CO
- *Human Trafficking Jam*—Karen Smith, ABC-IM Missionary in Thailand
- *Mobilized to Pray: Helping Your Church Become a House of Prayer*—Gina Gibson, Associate Pastor of FBC Cheyenne, WY
- *Financial Peace University*—David Emick, Lay leader of FBC Lamar, CO

If you would like to know any information about these or the workshops in session one, please contact the ABCRM office at office@abcrm.org or 303-988-3900.

Before the Gathering was complete, the ABCRM Board and Staff wanted to make sure that the churches of ABCRM are being heard. Each Cluster group split out and met with a representative of the Board. Three questions were asked of the clusters.

1. What are three wishes for your church?
2. What can the Region do to assist your church?
3. How do the Core Values of ABCRM relate to your church?

If you would like to answer these questions for your church, please send your responses to office@abcrm.org and they will be forwarded onto the ABCRM Board.

The 2008 Gathering of ABCRM was a great success. A big thank you goes out to Cheyenne First Baptist Church for all they did., especially to their ABW Ministries for their hard work.

The 2009 Gathering will be held October 16-17, 2009, with Ecumenical Church in Pueblo, CO hosting.



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

RMAB 10/31/08

Lessons From a Lapel Pin

Since becoming an American Baptist, I have appreciated the symbolism of our denominational logo. The cross superimposed on the world is a powerful statement about who we are and how we live. As an association of churches drawn together by the vision of taking the story of the cross to the whole world, our logo speaks truthfully about who we want to be. In order to do this, we must both be in the world but at the same time hold the demands of the cross as the overarching guide to our life and ministry in the world. It is a logo that will “preach” as some of my preacher colleagues would say.



When I came to the Rocky Mountain Region as your Executive Minister, I was glad to see the logo that has been used. As you know, that logo is morphed from the denominational logo, depicting the cross superimposed on a depiction of the Rocky Mountains. It too is a logo that will preach. It depicts our common commitment to seeing the “Good News” of the cross being preached to our own part of the world. Like with the denominational logo, it reminds us of the balance we must hold in our ministry to live in our culture but to always be directed by mandates of the cross.

And as glad as I was to see we had adapted the logo to one of our own, I was even more appreciative of the fact that at some point in our history, that logo had been made into lapel pins. (One of the classes I taught as an adjunct instructor at Ottawa University was “Mass Communications”—I know the power of branding.) I grabbed several intending to be sure that my jackets would all have this logo on them to show my loyalty and my appreciation for the ministry of our region. But then I discovered a problem.



If you have one these lapel pins, you probably already know where I am going with this. The pin was made with the cross being soldered on top of the oblong depiction of the Rocky Mountains. I have been wearing several pins thinking I was displaying our meaningful symbol, only to discover late in the day that the cross had fallen off the Rocky Mountains! You see, the mountains were anchored to my jacket by the pin, but the cross was held onto only by the solder joints. When brushed up against, the cross gave way and fell off. How frustrating. How disappointing. And unfortunately, how prophetic.

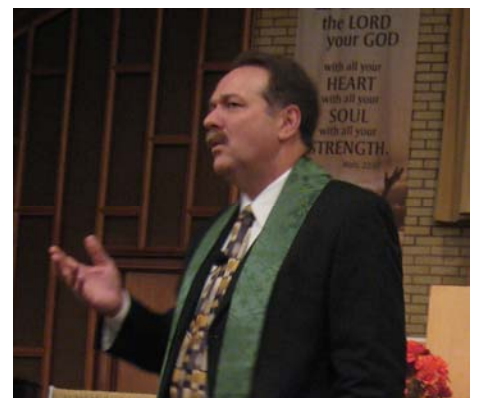
You see, it is obvious to me that we here in the Rocky Mountain region are indeed living in a Post-Christian culture. I say that not as a word of condemnation or judgment, but merely observation. Sunday is not primarily seen as “the Lord’s Day” or “the Sabbath, it is when the Bronco’s usually play, it is a day for soccer games or baseball or for a trip to the mountains.

Oh, I know we have a number of ministries based out of Colorado. Surely it can’t be all that bad. And yet the dominant thing that seems to drive our culture—our decision making and our values—is not Christ. For some it is the beautiful world that surrounds us. For others it is the valuable resources that can be milked from the land we live upon. For still others it is the recreation and fund that can be had from this land. In other words, it is the world in which we live that drives our culture, not Christ. And of course, we in the Rocky Mountain Region are not alone in this.

Now, as I thought about the “engineering” problem with the lapel pins, it seemed to me that there was a simple solution. Instead of anchoring the mountains with the pin, if the designer had anchored the cross instead the pressure of someone brushing against the pin would not have caused the solder joints to fail. The cross, being on top and being the anchor would have protected the world! The pin would have stayed intact much, much longer.

And of course, that’s the answer for our lives as well, isn’t it? The anchor needs to be the cross, not the world we live in. But how often do we just try to solder the cross to the life we live, instead of bringing our life to anchor of the Cross?

In Christ,
Steve Van O



ABCRM Mission Committee Announces Mission Experiences for 2009

Join ABCRM Mission Teams on mission experiences in 2009. As of publication time, three mission experiences have been scheduled. You can find more information about these mission experiences at <http://www.abcrm.org/mission/missionexperiences.htm>.

Thailand Feb. 11-25, 2009

- Hosting Missionaries - Chuck and Ruth Fox
- Estimated cost per person -\$2,000
- Limit of Mission Team participants - 8



- Trip Application Deadline - November 21, 2008
- Mission leader - Kerry Hassler
kerryhassler@comcast.net

Murrow Indian Children's Home April 19-25, 2009

- Hosting Missionaries - Joan Brown
- Estimated cost per person -\$225 plus meals and incidentals
- Limit of Mission Team participants - 8
- Trip Application Deadline - February 16, 2009



- Mission leader - Jenita Calton
mjmjpack@vcn.com

Bahamas May 9-16, 2009

- Hosting Missionaries - Daniel and Estela Schweissing
- Estimated cost per person -\$1,600
- Limit of Mission Team participants - 6
- Trip Application Deadline - February 9, 2009
- Mission leader—Rich Schweissing
rschweissing@msn.com



ABC Missionary Karen Smith

Continued from page 1

On Saturday she conducted one of the workshops and was able to spend more in-depth time with those who attended speaking to the needs of the girls and the New Life Center. Saturday night and Sunday she spoke to various groups at Crossroads Baptist in Northglenn/Thornton.

Between speaking engagements we were able to schedule some down time for her to enjoy the beauty of the Garden of the Gods, Rocky Mountain National Park, and a trip to downtown Denver. Having grown up in Hong Kong she enjoys both the outdoors and visiting cities.

To learn more about Karen or the New Life Center go to her website at http://www.internationalministries.org/missionary/karen_smith or <http://www.nlcfoundation.org/>.

*Rich Schweissing
ABCRM
Past-President*



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

American Indian Studies Colloquium at Bacone College

In light of recent research, examining the state of American Indian Studies, Bacone College in Muskogee, OK is hosting the Inaugural American Indian Studies Colloquium. This event focuses on the future of American Indian Studies, and how this degree will serve American Indian students after graduation, when they enter their future careers.

Bacone is still accepting proposals from all disciplines that examine, utilize, promote, or teach American Indian Studies.

The colloquium registration begins at 8:00am on November 21, 2008 located at the Bacone College Conference Center (formerly the Bacone Inn). A Continental Breakfast will be served from 8am - 9:00am. Closing remarks will end at 4:30pm.

To RSVP, please contact Dr. Joseph Bohanon, Asst. Professor of American Indian Studies and Director of the Native American Students of Promise Program, at (918) 781-7312.

*Ryan Hardaway
Director of Institutional Advancement
Bacone College*

November 21, 2008 is the Deadline to Sign up for the February 2009 Mission Experience to Thailand

ABCRM is sponsoring a mission experience to Thailand, February 11-25, 2009. The mission team will work with ABC-IM Missionaries Chuck and Ruth Fox in Chiang Rai, Thailand.



Several needs will be addressed by the mission team. The *Ban Huai Namkhum Phattana* Akha village near Chiang Rai needs a clean water supply for the 88 men, women, and children who live in its 19 households. The Chiang Rai *Family Learning Center* (FLC) Christian international school for English-speaking K12 students needs help with teaching and administrative staff assistance. And the Chiang Rai *New Life Center* (NLC) is in need of volunteers who can teach Akha women sheltered there various craft skills, as well as possibly teaching them English.

The estimated cost per person for this trip is \$2,000. There is a limit of 8 participants for this trip. Participants must apply by November 21, 2008 to be considered for this trip. Contact mission leader Kerry Hassler at kerryhassler@comcast.net or 303-665-7487 for more information. Trip participants must be age 18 or over; in good physical condition if helping build the clean water system; have teaching, storytelling, and/or craft skills if helping with FLC or NLC projects; and be flexible and willing to try new things.

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Committed to the Gospel!

Learn It, Live it,

Share It, Be It!

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