



The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

We're Discovering God Together

I LEFT THE 2005 ABCRM Gathering in Colorado Springs exhausted, a little frustrated that the session ended in an undesirable way, and deeply disappointed that we could not end our meeting with the planned communion service. Notwithstanding our difficulties, I left encouraged by how much we were able to accomplish. I left inspired to do what the delegates asked us to do. You as churches asked us to spend our primary energies on efforts that will seek the transformation of our churches into mission-focused, passion-filled believers. The Ministry and Mission Clusters were enthusiastically adopted. We adopted a budget where the majority of the financial resources will be spent on ministry and mission. We resolved to put in place a process that will help us clarify how we should respond to the challenge of human sexuality.

There were many positive aspects such as the stories we heard, prayer, worship, fellowship and the discovery sessions. Nevertheless, there are some concerns that we must address. We are part of a broader system that is filled with anxiety and stress. Although we cannot escape the presence of potential conflict, we must improve our discourse. Some of the inflam-

matory rhetoric was disrespectful; we must develop the ability to listen and engage respectfully.

I look forward to the next year as we address the following that come out of our time together:

Discovering God Together

The discovery of God needs to be at the center of our fellowship together. Our congregations should become places where people seeking God can indeed do so. The pastor who mentored me taught me that we can have a Christianity of vinegar or honey. My appeal to all of us is that we become honey Christians.

Focus on Ministry and Mission

The Discovery and Discernment Sessions that we have held and the resolution adopted by the Gathering delegates reinforced the strong resolve that our primary focus should be the vitality and well-being of our churches and pastors. Our aim as a Region is to help churches realize their mission and ministry.

Inside Information

- **Our God is Available for Discovery**
- **Baptists Respond Together**
- **Information on ABSW's Pastoral Leadership Conference**
- **UK Pastorate Exchange Opportunity**
- **"Wait on the Lord" Spiritual Formation Conference Details**
- **Appreciation for Pastor to Pastors Ministry**
- **and LOTS of Gathering photos!**

Clarify Our Identity

If we are going to grow, we need to know who we are and what we are proclaiming. We have to restate in modern language our long-held values. We should be clear about the glue that keeps us together. This year we will know how we will respond to the challenges brought about.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

Complete Restructure Cycle

We will give meaning to the Ministry and Mission Clusters. In the process we will be guided by intentional shifts.

We will also give attention to the writing of our longer term Bylaws. Given constant change, we know that this will be a cycle that will be ongoing.

Focus on Youth

A major concern expressed repeatedly in the cluster sessions was the under-representation of the under-forty group in our churches. If we continue to conduct our affairs in conflicting ways and focus on issues that are of less interest to this generation, we will reinforce the wall of separation and engrave the invisible unwelcome sign in front of our churches.

I look forward with great anticipation to our walking together as we learn what it means to discover God in uncomfortable places and see God in surprising ways that will open our eyes to the opportunities for ministry.

*Your partner in the gospel,
Desmond Hoffmeister
Transition Executive Minister*

ABCRM is a supportive relational community of churches and spiritual leaders, committed to Jesus Christ, collaborating to motivate, stimulate, and encourage each other to discern, discover, and obey the call of God in their sphere of influence.

Our God Is Available for Discovery

Those of us who attended the 2005 ABCRM Gathering in Colorado Springs on October 21-22 discovered God in surprising places as well as uncomfortable places. In his message to the Gathering on Friday night, Desmond Hoffmeister, Transition Executive Minister, shared insights from the life of Elijah (1 Kings 19). The cave, the mountain, the earthquake, the wind, and the fire were all possible venues for discovery—albeit uncomfortable. But the revelation came in a surprising gentle whisper.

This year's Gathering afforded opportunities to discover God. Some of them were familiar and comfortable, some may have been uncomfortable, and some were quiet surprises. Each attendee personalized these categories according to his/her experience.

For me the familiar and comfortable was evident in the faces of friends and acquaintances from across Wyoming and Colorado. As a long-time AB family member, I see God in the faces of my brothers and sisters. And youth who participated in the Friday night service of worship also reflected God's image as they sang God's praise.

The less comfortable was manifest in what we have come to call our worshipful work. Our denomination is precariously perched on a precipice of dissension. Even in the turmoil, however, God is available for discovery. If we can turn our attention away from conflicted agendas to ministry and mission, God is willing to show us the path forward. In the adoption of Interim Transition Bylaws, we opened the door of discovery to frame future ministry. In the careful consideration of our budget and finances, we were responsible stewards of God's gifts. Our expression of confidence in our leaders declares our desire to move forward together in our discovery process. Our decision to corporately discern how God would lead us as an American Baptist family in handling the issue of human sexuality will give us the opportunity to explore ways to live and work together.

And where were my surprising places? Maybe they weren't so surprising as they were quiet, like God's gentle whisper. I saw God, symbolized by the single lighted taper on the altar during Friday night's service of worship. The Saturday morning prayer breakfast afforded numerous opportunities to communicate with God. Later that morning, as I went from one Discovery Session to the next taking pictures of leaders and groups, I saw people engaged in the intentional discovery of Christian principles to help them in the ministry and mission of their local church. I heard God speak using the voices of those who detailed their own discoveries of God through spoken testimony.

Our quest to discover God together is truly an exciting, risky, invigorating journey. As American Baptists, we're deeply committed to the "together" part. We are an independent people who have discovered how to live together. May the journey forward remain passionate, yet unified.

*Ingrid Dvirnak
Newsletter Editor*

Ecumenical Opportunity for American Baptist Young Adults

An ecumenical experience for American Baptist young people that will be centered in the Taize community of France is scheduled for May 31-June 13, 2006.

“The purpose of the trip to Taize is to introduce young people age 17 to 29 to the ecumenical movement and to begin their ecumenical journey in prayer,” said Rothangliani Chhangte, director of Ecumenical Formation for American Baptist Churches USA. She noted that participants will spend a week in Taize “and join the community for sung prayer three times a day, meet with the Taize brothers for Bible study and belong to a small group of other young people from around the world.”

Chhangte will lead the event along with Brad Berglund, well-known American Baptist minister, pastoral musician, author, and worship leader.

The trip also will include visits to the World Council of Churches in Geneva and The Ecumenical Institute in nearby Bossey, as well as a tour of Old City Geneva that will highlight the Reformation. A day in Paris will conclude the event.

Information is available by e-mail at brad@reinventingsunday.com. A brochure detailing the event will be available shortly on www.abcunity.org.

Courtesy of the AB News Service

Stewardship conceived in depth is no less than. . .

the care and nurture of life,
the healing of one who fell amongst thieves,
the feeding of the hungry,
the freeing of the oppressed,
the befriending of the friendless,
equitable distribution of earth's bounty,
the passion for justice and peace,
the dialogue with all who hunger and thirst for authenticity.

Stewardship thus conceived is not a build-up of influence, power, and property. It is not storing up possessions. It is not a head-count of converts. Stewardship is working for what God...seeks, in great humility, to being about: the peace, abundance, and glory of the creation. By God's grace we are empowered to serve. So stewardship is not an option. It is a total attitude. It centers the Christian upon the world God loves.¹

¹Peter Gordon White, “Christian Stewardship as the Root of Mission,” *Journal of Stewardship*, vol. 33, p. 34.

Submitted by Carol Willard

Xtreme Team Receiving Applications for 2006

During the 2005 ABCRM Gathering, we had the opportunity to hear Ryan Horne share his story as a member of this year's Xtreme Team that traveled to Georgia. The Xtreme Team mission experience has had a great impact on the lives of many young adults.

You have the opportunity to identify and encourage young adult leaders within our Region to apply for the Xtreme Team. Your help and support is vital to attract the most promising young leaders throughout the denomination.

The Xtreme Team will launch its ninth year of ministry by fielding two separate teams to South America in 2006. One team has been invited by the National Baptist Convention and ABC missionaries Ann and Bruce Borquist to experience mission in Brazil. The other team has been invited by the Baptist Union and ABC missionaries Iris and Mario Morales to experience mission in Bolivia.

The Xtreme Team is open to American Baptist young adults between the ages of 19-29. This mission experience begins with orientation on June 28 and ends August 5 at the World Mission Conference. The cost of \$3900 covers all the expenses for the trip.

Those interested can visit the website at www.xtremeteam-online.org to read journals, see pictures, learn more about the program, and submit an application. Applications for 2006 teams will be accepted into January.

Silence and Solitude: Preparing the Soul to Discover God Anew

Over 40 people attended the pre-Gathering event for ABCRM clergy and spouses led by Jeff Savage. The event was co-sponsored by the ABCRM Ministers Council and the Region and hosted by First Baptist Church of Colorado Springs, CO where Mike Sayler serves as pastor. Mike is also the president of the ABCRM Ministers Council.

Jeff Savage is the pastor of First Baptist Church in Springfield, OR. His presentations were based on his doctoral work which centered on the development of spiritual leaders with special attention given to spiritual formation through the practice of spiritual disciplines in the context of Christ-centered small groups and intentional spiritual friendships. Quoting Eugene Peterson, he asserted, “The pastor’s responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God.”

He acknowledged that speaking to pastors and their spouses about living the spiritual life could be construed as akin to preaching to the choir. Pastors are thought to be the “experts” in this field. However, there are myriad hindrances to spiritual living. Pastors and laity alike need to develop a pattern of spiritual living that allows them to discover God.

According to Jeff, spiritual disciplines are an essential piece in the pattern. A discipline is an activity within our power that enables us to accomplish what we cannot do by direct effort.

The second piece of the pattern is participation in small groups. Jeff offered nine keys to healthy small groups. They must be centered in Jesus Christ, led by a person who helps the group define their task and identify a clear purpose. To be

‘doing’ ministry?” Jeff said the answer is counterintuitive. The way to stay attentive to God is through silence and solitude. He went on to say, “Solitude and silence gives God space. Do *nothing* so *something* can happen.”



successful, the group must also have a strong beginning and study worthwhile material. Group members should communicate clearly, trust one another, and practice positive decision-making.

Spiritual friendships comprise a third pattern piece. Spiritual friends are engaged in a relationship with Christ, practice spiritual disciplines, are compassionate, demonstrate genuine respect for others, are committed to confidentiality, and are able to practice self-disclosure and give constructive feedback

Addressing the question, “How do we stay attentive to God while

How does all this work in his church? Jeff acknowledges that FBC/Springfield hasn’t grown so much in numbers as in spiritual depth. In the 17 years he has been their pastor, they have never had an acrimonious business meeting. What does he recommend? His answers were clear and concise: a unified annual worship and ministry emphasis; a Lenten call to rest and prayer for the entire congregation, including ministry teams and the church council; recommended spiritual reading list for the entire year, spiritual life retreats, small group ministry, and the transformation of committees into ministry teams.

Ingrid Dvirnak

American Baptists. . .Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. . .Progressive National Baptist Convention

Baptists Respond Together

American Baptist Churches USA General Secretary Roy Medley and Cheryl Dudley, National Ministries' associate executive director for Church in Community Transformation, recently participated in a two-day meeting of clergy and denominational leaders from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Progressive National Baptist Convention in Baton Rouge, LA, to determine ways Baptists can cooperate in ministry to recent hurricane victims and address issues of poverty uncovered by the storms' furies.

A first for the Baptist groups, the gathering crossed racial and geographic boundaries. Each denominational leader promised the event was only a first step in their walk together to stand with those who have suffered such great personal loss through the recent storms, and to address the poverty and race issues that contributed to disparate treatment of individuals and families during this complex disaster.

Local pastors whose churches were transformed into shelters by Hurricane Katrina participated in the two-day event at New Light Missionary Baptist Church. One session, which drew more than 50 people, also included local and state elected officials, along with representatives from the Baton Rouge, New Orleans and national offices of Habitat for Humanity.

Addressing Baton Rouge Mayor Melvin "Kip" Holden, who spoke about the city's response to New Orleans evacuees, Medley outlined

American Baptists' relief efforts to meet the unprecedented needs caused by the disaster, and asked how churches can continue to respond in a meaningful way. "Katrina unearthed an ugly secret in our country," Medley added. "How can we work toward an America that is more just and more fair? How can we speak out for justice?"

Dudley told the mayor, "As Baptists, we need to be together; we want to be together. We are here to pledge our continued presence for those who are suffering."

Holden told the Baptist leaders, "The hearts are so big, the efforts are great, and you will never be forgotten for your efforts."

"We are here to listen and to learn from you about what we can do at this time that will be of help," Medley said. "We are deeply concerned about you and thankful for you and the work you have been doing. We represent a lot of churches—some are big, some small—but they all want to reach out and help. We are their eyes and their ears, so we can go back and tell them how to help you. Know our hearts are with you."

Dudley pointed out that American Baptist Churches USA represents 5,800 churches across the United States. "We are trying to discern what it is that is tangible that we can do to be repairers of the breach, restorers of the street," she said. "We are pledging our support and our intention to work with you throughout the healing process."

Dudley offered pastors two Judson Press books—*Surviving Grief: 30 Questions and Answers for a Time of Loss* and *A Pastor in Every Pew: Equipping Laity for Pastoral Care*—as gifts from National Ministries to support ministries to shelter residents and survivors of the storms.

Looking to the larger issues brought to light by Hurricane Katrina, Medley said, "Poverty wears a particular color in this country. How do we take this moment to determine the Christian responsibility so that all people can help in harmony? This poverty points to the role of race in our country. How do we deal with the issue in a way that brings healing and grace? We do not want this poison to reach into future generations."

Other Baptist leaders participating in the Baton Rouge event included Jeffrey Haggray, executive minister, District of Columbia Baptist Convention, aligned with both American Baptist Churches USA and the Progressive National Baptist Convention; Tyrone Pitts, general secretary, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Washington, DC, and Daniel Vestal, national coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Atlanta, GA. Together these leaders represent nearly five million Baptists in the United States.

In a prayer that closed the two-day meeting, Medley said, "Loving God, pour out your blessing. Open the doors of heaven that every need of these people might be met."

*Courtesy of the
American Baptist News Service*

Pastor Expresses Appreciation for Pastor to Pastors Program

I would like to express my appreciation for our Pastor to Pastors program and for Richard Bowermaster, the person who carries out this valuable ministry. Funded by what used to be Area III, this program is intended to reach out to pastors in that same geographical area.

Richard Bowermaster met me at our church. As it happened, I also needed counsel about ministering and providing counsel to someone in a matter that was more complex than normal. Richard not only shared needed insight on the counseling issue, but he also encouraged me in many other ways by the virtue of his years of experience as God's servant.

Those of us who serve in the local pastorate sometimes feel isolated. We can benefit from receiving pastoral counseling ourselves. In addition, we renew our connection to the larger family. To my peers I would say, call him and be blessed.

*Wade Long
Pastor, FBC/Rocky Ford, CO*

**East and West Wyoming
Discovery and Discernment
Session**

Saturday, November 12

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

**at First Baptist Church
in Casper**

Discovering God Together!

Register Now for ABSW's 2006 Pastoral Leadership Conference

ABSW's annual continuing education event, the Pastoral Leadership Conference, is now receiving registrations for the 2006 gathering, to be held January 9-11. "With Strength of Heart and Mind: Envisioning Worship Renewal" is the 2006 theme. They are planning an exciting conference, one that will balance learning, sharing, and rich fellowship in a new setting for the PLC, Vallombrosa Center (Menlo Park) www.vallombrosa.org.

This conference is open to a variety of persons in ministry. While the focus is pastoral, they are dedicated to making sure there is something of interest for all who attend: those in chaplaincies, in congregational ministries, those who are retired but still enjoy collegial fellowship and learning, seminary students, ministry volunteers, and committed lay persons.

The featured speaker this year is James Abbington, noted scholar, writer, educator, and musician. James is Associate Professor of Music and Worship at Candler School of Theology, Emory University (Atlanta, GA). By going to www.abswplc.net you can find more information about Dr. Abbington, plus all the details for PLC 2006. At the website there is also more information about Vallombrosa Center, a schedule for the three days of the conference, cost and registration information, and photos from past PLCs.

The 2006 PLC has an additional exciting aspect. Part of the funding for this year's conference comes from a worship renewal grant written by Nancy Hall and received by ABSW from Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Read more about this at www.abswplc.net. From the website you will be directed to the online registration pages for the event. ABSW is equipped to receive your registration information and your payment by credit card for the conference fees. Space will be somewhat limited this year, because the seminary's middler students, teaching pastors, and others will be in attendance, as part of the grant.

Please register and pay your fees as soon as possible. Registration is now open; the deadline is December 5th. If you like, you can go directly to the event registration page at <http://www.absw.edu/registrationform.php3>.

Brochures for PLC 2006, "With Strength of Heart and Mind: Envisioning Worship Renewal" have been mailed. If you have not already received this first-class mailing and would like a brochure sent to you, please e-mail your name and address to nhall@absw.edu. A brochure will be put in the mail to you immediately. Please note that both the website (www.abswplc.net) and the brochure include information about financial aid opportunities for ABC ministerial leaders.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Nancy Hall at 510-841-1905, ext 232, or nhall@absw.edu.

Opportunity for UK Pastorate Exchange

David Warrington is an ordained minister of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, serving a small Baptist congregation in a rural area on the south-western edge of the Yorkshire Dales. He is seeking to facilitate an exchange with an American pastor in 2006. He is looking for an exchange within "reasonable traveling distance" of Los Angeles where his brother lives.

They have a modest three-bedroom Manse in a village about ten minutes' walk from the church building. The Warringtons are a family of four with two teenage children, so they need a house with three bedrooms in the States. His wife, Alison, has severe back and knee problems and so has limited mobility. She has difficulties negotiating lots of steps on a regular basis and needs access to a walk-in shower and ground floor bathroom during the day.

The Warringtons are willing to consider exchanging use of cars if it is mutually suitable and if insurance coverage can be arranged.

Ideally, the Warringtons would like to exchange pastorates for an eight-week period in 2006, preferably between July 10 and September 4. This would be on the basis that four weeks would be "work" weeks (preaching and looking after the pastoral needs of the congregation) and four weeks would be part of their annual leave. Each pastor would, with the agreement of his/her own church, retain his/her own salary for the period, thus incurring no entanglement with the British or American tax systems.

South Craven Baptist Church was formed from an amalgamation five years ago of two small rural churches, but has a history going back about 300 years. The area is surrounded by moors and farmland on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales, but is not far from several large towns and cities. The church's membership totals about 50, with Sunday attendance reaching between 50 and 60. The church is traditional, not charismatic, but open to doing things differently, including learning new songs. Although they lean toward a traditional worship style, they are not necessarily extremely conservative in thought.

If you are interested, please contact Rev. David A. Warrington, 10 Sunnybank Villas, Glusburn, KEIGHLEY, West Yorkshire, Great Britain BD20 8PY. Telephone number: 01144 1535 637012. His e-mail address is david.warrington@tiscali.co.uk.

Wait on the Lord

A Spiritual Formation
Conference
presented by
American Baptist Churches
USA

**April 17-20, 2006
Orlando, FL**

Psalm 27:14: *"Wait for the
LORD; be strong,
and let your heart
take courage;
wait for the LORD!"*

Christian spiritual formation is the life long process of being conformed to the image of Christ by the gracious working of God's Spirit through the Scriptures, for the transformation of the individual and the world.

Online registration is
available now at
[http://www.ministers-
council.com/WaitontheLord-
Information.aspx](http://www.ministers-council.com/WaitontheLord-Information.aspx)

***What better way
for ministers to spend
the week
following Easter 2006?***



Left: Kim Shimer of Judson Press staffed the Gathering bookstore.

Right: ABW Ministries presidents, Barbara Vinzant (WY) and Jackie Arnold (CO) co-hosted the Friday night dinner.



ABCRM 2005 Gathering Family Album



Friday Night Service of Worship



Clockwise, beginning at upper left:
Desmond Hoffmeister, Transition Executive Minister, preacher
Jeff Savage, worship leader
Brad Berglund, worship leader
the Light of Christ among us
the youth choir
Brad Berglund and Jeff Savage, worship leaders.

Special thanks to Clint Walker, youth pastor at FBC in Colorado Springs for the pictures on this page.

Baptists, food, and fellowship--they just seem to go together!



Discovery Sessions and Leaders: (below): Slayden Yarbrough, Janice Newman, Bill Mitchell (right) Kay Farley, Jeff Savage, Jan McCormack, Desmond Hoffmeister



It Was All About Prayer



At this year's Gathering, we began Saturday's activities with prayer. Tom Wheeler, pastor of FBC/Ft. Morgan designed the hour using visual images, scripture, and music. Assisting him were Brad Bergland and Jeff Savage. Interspersed throughout were testimonies of people whose lives have been changed by prayer.

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

is published by the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains

Desmond Hoffmeister: Transition Executive Minister

Ingrid Dvirnak: Newsletter Editor

American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains
6855 S. Havana Street, Ste. 220
Centennial, CO 80112