



# The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

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

## Special Gathering Edition

### National Leaders Make Powerful Impression at Gathering

ABC-USA National Leaders, Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer and Rev. Sharon Koh, both made powerful impressions at the ABCRM Annual Gathering held September 26-28 at Central Baptist Church in Denver. Spitzer serves as General Secretary for ABC-USA and Koh is the Executive Director of International Ministries, ABC's Missionary Agency for work outside the US.

Spitzer taught a workshop on his book titled Making Friends, Making Disciples: Growing Your Church through Authentic Relationships on Thursday and returned to this theme in his keynote address during the Friday evening worship service. Highlighting the fact that most people begin attending church and ultimately enter into closer relationship with Christ via close friendship, Spitzer encouraged American Baptists to create space for new friendships outside the traditional circles of church.



Koh brought several members of the IM staff to teach workshops and share about the ministry of IM. Rodney Ragwan, IM Director for Mission Mobilization, led a workshop about "Understanding God's Call" and Rev. Dr. Ray Schooler, IM's VP of Development, led a workshop titled "Cultivating Generosity". In Koh's keynote address she highlighted ABCRM's faithful relationship with IM and made a case for the continued need of IM's global servants with Partner organizations around the world. Koh highlighted the fact that IM global servants always begin their service at the request of partners

which allow them to have immediate impact in their countries of service.

Koh and Spitzer also joined Executive Minister of ABCRM, Rev. Steve Van Ostran, in a group interview around the subject of denominational ministry in an Age of Disconnection. Questions were fielded by host pastor, Rev. Rodney Perry and directed to the panel.

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The presence of all the national leaders was met with great interest and these leaders were seen throughout the day talking with ABCRM folk about their ministries, answering questions and building relationships.

In gratitude for their service and recognition of the sacrifice they have made on our behalf, ABCRM presented both leaders with an original stained-glass piece following the Friday evening worship service.

*Pictured: Rev. Sharon Koh, Rev. Kay Farley, Rev. Dr. Steve Van Ostran, Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer*



## The Way Forward in An Age of Disconnection

Turning our attention to the State of the Region report is always a critical part of the annual ABCRM Gathering. This year our Executive Minister gathered us around the difficult realities of doing gospel ministry in an age of disconnection, when not only the church and culture are disconnected, but especially when churches in our region are disconnected from one another.



In his message titled, “Regional Ministry in An Age of Disconnection”, Dr. Steve Van Ostran passionately brought us back to a time in our history when “American Baptist” meant a common commitment to mission and ministry that drew us together to make significant social impacts in the local community. A time when social services were at the heart of our gospel work. Referring to the 25th chapter of Matthew’s gospel he urged us to set our sights and our resolve back to being churches of impact and cultural change.

He reminded us that while our region is in good shape financially, we would be wise to link financial resources to shared mission for gospel impact and not grow lethargic or comfortable in our financial strength.

“If we are going to reconnect with our call to mission and ministry as a regional body, we have to do

more than just fund missions,” he said, “it is time for us to stop being just a mission support organization and to again be a missionary organization.”

In a call to stop fighting with other Christians about “tertiary theological issues” and instead reconnect on the primary issues of what it means to be “Baptist” for the greater good and the impact of the gospel, Dr. Van Ostran highlighted two primary values:

- Proclaim that Jesus is Lord.
- Understand who Jesus is and how God works in the world through the authority of scripture.

“These two values are primary and, in my mind, define a Christian church that can cooperate with ecumenical ventures and ministries.” he stated.

He then identified two secondary values:

- The community of faith determines the proper understanding of scripture.
- The personal regeneration of God’s word as demonstrated through public profession of faith.

Stating that while the tertiary theological issues are not unimportant, they should not keep us from uniting around the primary values in our mission to connect the world and culture to the truth and person of Jesus.

The way forward is to look backward. Look back at the historical impact of a church, a denomination,

and a people who took seriously the call of Jesus. To be a region that connects to people outside of the church. To care for and love the poor, the hungry, the prisoner, the weak while at the same time encouraging one another and the greater culture that God is still at work in our world and God's work gets done by the empowerment of the Spirit in His people. Together.

The way forward is to link with one another, with those who subscribe to the primary values of traditional Christian faith, in the action of incarnational mission linked to our support of incarnational mission. "Let's not settle for disconnection. Let's get back to the roots of who we are not only as Baptists, but as members of the larger body of Christ."

Dr. Van Ostran then closed with three challenges for the ABCRM:

- Recognize that God is still using and at work in others who see tertiary issues differently (evolution, global warming, human sexuality, slavery, etc.).
- Recognize that answers to tertiary issues are rarely A or B but often something entirely different.
- Treat all people as children of God who are created and loved by God.

Regional ministry in an age of disconnection means linking arms in the name and power of Jesus for incarnational gospel impact in a world and culture in desperate need of connection to Him.

*Dr. Kim Skattum  
Pastor to Pastor, ABCRM*

## A Marvelous Meal Bathed in Majestic Splendor

**"And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; and they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth;" Micah 5:4 (NKJV)**

As the ABCRM family gathered on that Thursday evening for the Clergy Appreciation Dinner at The Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library, located in the historical "Five Point" community of Denver, the atmosphere was filled with excitement and anticipation. The agenda for the evening had been planned with meticulous care. There was "a sweet, sweet spirit" in the place.

As "the church" arrived in "the library" we were welcomed by the music of The Wil Alston Band. One could feel the welcoming presence of "the Spirit of the Lord" in our midst. The selections that the band played invited all who entered into the room to enter into fellowship with God



and each other. The atmosphere was right for food, fun and fellowship!

The meal that was prepared for us was prepared by "Two Sistah's Catering". The two sisters that operate their own catering service are a part of an outstanding culinary family in Denver that have long roots in serving the Denver community for over 50 years. Those who knew the legacy of "Two Sistah's Catering" waited with great anticipation for what would be offered up for our "soul satisfaction"! Those who were tasting their food for the first time would soon find a place in their "amen corner". As expected, the food heightened our fellowship! We were dining on a culinary feast in fellowship with each other and in the presence of the Lord! The music of the evening was not just coming from Wil Alston's Band. After dining on the meal the music of delight was playing deep within our collective souls! Did our hearts not burn as we dined in the presence of the Lord!

Our keynote speaker for the evening was Wellington Webb (along with his wife Wilma), the first African American



mayor of the City of Denver. He was elected in 1991 and he served three terms as the mayor of Denver. It should also be noted that Wellington Webb served with distinction on the national level and in various capacities on the state level in Colorado. As Mayor Webb shared his heart with those who were gathered in his presence, he reflected on his passion and vision for serving others. He also affirmed that his faith was foundational to all that God had enabled him to achieve.

As our time together concluded, I am confident in saying, “we shared a marvelous meal bathed in the majestic splendor of God.” Perhaps, a verse or two of “Sweet, Sweet Spirit” may have enhanced our conclusion. Oh well, I trust that all who attended this wonderful event left feeling that they had been with God, and God had blessed their soul! Amen.

*Rev. Larron D. Jackson, DMin,  
Ministry and Mission Coach, Denver Cluster*

## The Greater ABC Family

As I witnessed all the booths setting up, I was curious about the connection of each to the ABCRM family. I found that the American Baptist Church family includes a variety of supporting and outreach ministries. Pastors have many organizations at their fingertips to assist them with personal planning, church planning, and connecting people to missionaries. It makes me wonder if these organizations are used often. Just curious!

The first of the booths I learned about was MMBB, which is a financial service ministry. Their goal is to help churches manage their finances, but they also help pastors organize their personal finances. As a member of MMBB, pastors can have a financial planner consult with him or her to meet their personal financial goals. Also, MMBB provides pastors with helpful information about compensation, sabbaticals, and pastoral relations committees. This material can strengthen the relationships between pastors and their congregations. This seems to be an amazing organization to help pastors be mindful and healthy with financial management tools for their church and himself or herself.

The second booth I did not really know about was the American Baptist Extension Corp. This is an organization that focuses on lending for churches. Their main goal is to help investors prepare for their futures while building stronger congregations and communities. Their main values are: invest with us, plan with us, and build with us. ABEC helps churches position themselves to obtain financing, build responsibly, and serve their communities

effectively. They desire to be a bridge to help churches reach their dreams in a responsible manner.

The third booth that stood out to me was IM, International Ministries. We also got to have the CEO of IM, Sharon Koh with us for the Gathering as well. I found that the heart of IM is to equip the body of



As I reflect about all I witnessed and learned at the Gathering, specifically from the booths, I see that the ABC is a large family with mission and service at its core through responsibility and love. The ABC family is devoted to nurturing disciples of Jesus Christ who live their lives in mission and ministry to share the love of God in their church, in their communities, and all around the world.

*Lauren Parliament*

## Central Baptist Church Sets the Hospitality Bar High

From the smiling faces that greeted people as they entered the church to the abundant array of goodies and beverages that were available throughout the Gathering, members of Central Baptist Church displayed a welcoming and joyful attitude about serving during the 2019 Gathering. Cynthia Harris was in charge of organizing the church volunteers and making sure everything was ordered, set up and cleaned up at the end of each day. She is amazing. Here are the wonderful church volunteers that made everyone who attended the 2019 Gathering feel welcome:

- Andre Alexander
- Pat Allen
- Joyce Askew
- Preston Askew
- Iris Braddock
- James Efferson
- Cynthia Harris
- Ricky Harris
- James Henderson
- Mary Henderson
- Rodney Perry, Jr.
- Charlene Slay
- Deacon Doyle Slay
- Yvette Sloan
- Elmer Tinsley

During the Gathering, Pastor Rodney Perry and First Lady Sheila Perry set the tone for the event. They were gracious hosts and ABCRM is thankful for their leadership and hospitality. You have set the hospitality bar high!

*Karen Van*



## ABCRM Presents Gathering Workshops

Each year, ABCRM provides a learning opportunity for pastors and church leaders at the Gathering. This year, participants had the opportunity to attend the *Gathering University*. Ten workshops on various topics were presented in three different “trimesters.”

The workshops focused on leadership development, personal development, discipleship, and mission support. Instructors included Steve Van Ostran, Lee Spitzer, Javon Bracy, Morgan Fletcher, Steve Cuss, Dave DeMott, Rodney Ragwan, Brian Gray, Matt Manning, Ray Schooler, and Mike Oldham.

The variety of topics enabled participants to pick classes that spoke their personal needs or the needs of their church. Each workshop engaged the participants in group discussions to help them wrestle with contextualizing the learning. Even though these workshops addressed difficult issues, there was much laughter and eagerness to learn and make changes.

Approximately 60 people participated in the various workshops.



Mike Oldham



Steve Cuss

### Thanks to the Gathering Committee

It takes a lot of work and coordination to plan a successful Gathering. Many thanks to Estelle Torpy, the Gathering Committee, Central Baptist Church and the ABCRM staff who all support the many aspects of the event. Also, a special thanks to Alyce for the production of the Gathering book and registration.

- Gathering Committee:
- Estelle Torpy, Chair
  - Eugene Downing
  - Kay Farley
  - Mike Oldham
  - Rodney Perry
  - Steve Van Ostran
  - Karen Van



**Thank you to all those who attended our Annual Gathering this year. Your presence was greatly appreciated.**

## Reconnecting With “Being Baptist”

*Note: As a part of my annual report on the state of the Region, I took time to address our theme of Ministry in An Age of Disconnection as it relates to Regional Ministry. During the next few months, I hope to reiterate the main points that I raised in this address as a way of continuing and fleshing out this discussion. Since I do not preach/teach from a manuscript, I will be trying to say in writing what I hoped to verbalize in my address to the Region. I am hopeful that you will find these articles to be consistent with what was presented at the Gathering. Your feedback is appreciated.*

If we as a Region...and by “Region “ I mean the association of churches that is ABCRM, not the staff who serve this association...we will need to reconnect with what it means to be a “Baptist”. I know that for many the idea of tribalism is falling out of vogue...that to simply be a church that is following Christ is enough. And yet there are important reasons to be and to live out our faith as Baptists.

Some will immediately assume I am talking about Baptist Freedom. While the Baptist “Freedom” are an important part of our tribal identity, Baptist Freedom has come to mean something that was never intended. For many, Baptist Freedom means they are free to believe whatever they want. Unfortunately, this understanding is a perversion of the “freedom of the Believer”. While Baptists do proudly stand for and proclaim religious freedom and the freedom of the believer, our freedom exists within the context of a community, within the context of a common faith and within the context of a common practice of that faith.

That faith of course is Christian. Baptists have always been...and always will be...believers in the divinity of Christ as expressed in the person of Jesus: that the man Jesus was, is and ever shall be the human expression of God.

That’s important.

While we may work with and be courteous to those of other faiths... while some Baptist’s may believe

that God will in grace and mercy count one’s practice of another faith as righteous and holy (although I find no Biblical confirmation of this)... Baptists have always been Christ followers.

Further, our understanding of Christ has always been shaped by what we have read and discerned from Scripture. While Baptists will have different hermeneutics (frameworks of interpreting scripture) and therefore differing theologies (literally “God Talk” or beliefs about the nature and work of God), we have always said that the primary source for our understanding is Scripture and what it reveals to us about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Our theology, like our practice of Holy Communion, should be shaped by what has been passed down to us through Holy Scripture and not by culture, reason, other faith stories or even human imagination; It absolutely must be grounded in Scripture. Yes, our theology is going to be informed by all of these things, but these cannot be the starting point but instead seasoning to what we discern from Scripture about who God is and how God works!

And, of course, these two things are not uniquely Baptist, but instead a part of the Christian faith as a whole. Our Methodist, Presbyterian and other brothers and sisters of the Reformation also taught “Sola Scriptura!”

What begins to define “Baptist” belief, then, is the understanding of who ultimately has authority to determine what the Bible actually means... what it actually says. Baptist like other “protestants” do not give one person the authority to determine the ultimate meaning of Scripture, but instead believe that this must be discerned by the community of faith. This is more than being “anti-papist” but instead grows out of our understanding that God can and does speak to all of us... that every believer possesses the ability to speak to and be spoken to by God. We affirm the priesthood of the believer and therefore the need to consult the entire community of faith in discerning God’s direction of our

lives and our understanding of God’s being. The fancy term for this is that Baptists are “congregational”; our rule/government is by the body, not by one or a small group of leaders.

Critical to this is also the understanding that in discerning God’s will on any of these issues is not simply a matter of what the majority desire or believe but indeed seeking to understand and discern God’s will even if it complicates our life personally (think of Jesus in the Garden... “not my will, but thine”).

And finally, If the decisions made by “the Body”, the membership of the church, are so important that they literally interpret God’s will, then all members of the body must clearly be followers of Christ. That is why our forebearers insisted on “re-baptism” after a profession of their faith in Christ. Our emphasis on Baptism is not about how someone comes to be saved, but about who can take part in the discernment of God’s will for the congregation.

Of course, that does not seem to be as important to us a few hundred years later... what was a radical way of living one’s faith is almost normative today. Many other Christian tribes subscribe to these very same principles but included other things that were important to their understanding of the Christian walk to be part of their core values. But for we Baptists, these four things seem to be primary to our identity.

And while “Baptist” has had a lot of other baggage attached to it... some of it good and some of it not so good... at our core this defines what it means to be “Baptist” ... to be a follower of Christ as defined by Scripture and discerned in a Community of Believers who have made their faith known publicly and submitted themselves to live in mutual accountability with one another.

It is this understanding of “Baptist” to which we need to reconnect.  
Or at least, that’s my opinion. What do you think?

Steve Van O

## Annual Gatherings Pics



Rev. Shannon Warner , pastor of True Light Baptist Church, gives the Saturday morning devotion.

Below  
Friday Night Worship  
Rev. Sharon Koh, Rev. Rodney Perry, Central Baptist), Steve Van Ostran, Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer and Central’s Choir.



Rev. Rodney Perry brings greetings at the Friday Night Worship Service.

Below  
Rev. Dr. James Peters gives the Friday morning devotion.



Matt Manning, Region Board President leading the Business Meeting.

# First Baptist Church of Lusk Celebrates Centennial

On August 25, 2019, the First Baptist Church of Lusk WY celebrated its centennial. At a program in the sanctuary, moderator Randi Ross gave three short talks on what was happening in the world in 1919, what happened in Lusk, and the history of the church. Members of the congregation provided additional highlights.

Karen and Kenny Gaukel presented a musical interlude between the talks with Gospel songs in bluegrass style.



*Karen and Kenny Gaukel making bluegrass music*

Highlights from 1919 that Randi shared: The 18th Amendment to the US Constitution had been ratified and prohibition began. The 19th Amendment was submitted to the states. This amendment would guarantee women the right to vote (allowing the rest of the United States to catch up to Wyoming who had acknowledged the right of women to vote from their beginning). In 1919, the nation was moving from the agony of the 'war to end all wars' and recuperating from the worldwide flu epidemic. They were on the cusp of the exuberance of the Roaring Twenties. Oregon instituted the first gasoline tax. And in the little Wyoming town of Lusk, a group of Baptists held a revival in a tent and founded the First Baptist Church. Later that year, with winter approaching, they decided they needed something more secure than a tent and bought the former Congregational Church building at Third and Elm. The church growth in the 1950's stretched the capacity of the old building, and a new church building was built on the site of the old one and dedicated in 1962. With renovations, this building still serves the congregation today.



*Randi Ross*



*Tom and Loydaine Strock*

Pastor Tom Strock has served the church faithfully for twenty-two years. Tom also owns and operates a cattle and sheep ranch in Douglas.

Following the program, a reception honoring their history was held in the Fellowship Hall. Several photo albums were available for guests to

browse through. Members and guests alike enjoyed looking at pictures of former pastors, current members who have aged a little with the church, and telling stories that often began with, "I remember..."

Cakes decorated with images of the original and the present buildings highlighted the history. Members and guests enjoyed the refreshments and a time of reminiscing about the past and looking toward the future. The church has been an outpost in eastern Wyoming for the Gospel for a century. They look forward to serving for the next century.

*Bill Mankin*



*Cake images of the old (1919) and new (1962) church.*

# October is World Mission Offering Month

For information on how you can give visit  
[www.internationalministries.org](http://www.internationalministries.org) or [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org).



INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES  
COME. GROW. CHANGE.  
[www.worldmissionoffering.org](http://www.worldmissionoffering.org)



CARMELLA JONES

## EVANGELISM, DISCIPLESHIP, EDUCATION

I am blessed to serve in a small school teaching English to children with learning disabilities and behavior problems, including dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity disorder and autism.

As a co-teacher, I am in front of the class both providing instruction and monitoring students when they are working on class assignments. In this role, I am able to serve as a reminder of God's love and presence.

One morning during a second-grade class, I witnessed one of the boys having a very hard time concentrating. Initially, I stood beside him to encourage him, but it was clear he was becoming more agitated. As I sat next to him, he began to cry. I rubbed his back while he worked. When the class ended, he packed his book bag and then kissed me on the cheek!

Jesus commands us to care for the least of these. In caring, Jesus pours out living water not only on the person who is obviously in need, but it is also poured over the giver of care and we are all transformed.

*Carmella Jones | IM global servant for Evangelism, Discipleship and Education*

The Rev. Carmella Jones serves in Hungary as a school chaplain through IM partner Hungarian Baptist Aid. In this position, Carmella teaches English, acts as a listening presence and offers pastoral care to children and families with special needs. Her experience in theological and nursing education uniquely equips her to teach and support spiritual and physical well-being. As an integrator of faith and health, Carmella seeks to provide care in the context of peoples' values, beliefs and faith practices when providing compassionate support.

YOU CAN JOIN US by giving to the World Mission Offering through your church or online at [www.worldmissionoffering.org](http://www.worldmissionoffering.org). Thank you!



**NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
REV. EUGENE M. DOWNING JR., D. MIN., PASTOR



# FALL REVIVAL

OCTOBER 24<sup>TH</sup> - 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2019 | WORSHIP SERVICE: 7:00 P.M.



**GUEST PREACHER**

**REV. DR. OTIS MOSS, III**

Trinity United Church of Christ  
Chicago, Illinois

**ACCOMPANIED BY**

**THE TRINITY UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST WOMEN'S CHOIR**

**THURSDAY - OCT. 24<sup>TH</sup>**  
**REVIVAL WORSHIP | 7 P.M.**

**FRIDAY - OCT. 25<sup>TH</sup>**  
**REVIVAL WORSHIP | 7 P.M.**

3701 Colorado Boulevard, Denver, CO 80205  
303-322-5200 | [www.NewHopeChurchDenver.org](http://www.NewHopeChurchDenver.org)

**LANDMARK MINISTRIES**  
presents **LIVE MUSIC**

# Pack the PEW

**October 19, 2019 ~ 5:30 p.m.**

**FREE EVENT**

LANDMARK MINISTRIES  
Fellowship Hall  
3800 E. Hampden Ave.  
Englewood, CO 80113

**Performances By:**

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Dare to Believe ~ Daughters of Destiny  
For His Glory Christian Church ~ House of Hope  
Inner Court Praise Team  
King Baptist Church ~ Paradise Baptist Church  
Stagia Byrd ~ Edna Robinson

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## Puerto Rico & Houston Texas Rebuilding Service Trips

1. January 12 - January 21 Puerto Rico
2. April 19 - April 28 Puerto Rico
3. May 17 - May 27 Houston Texas

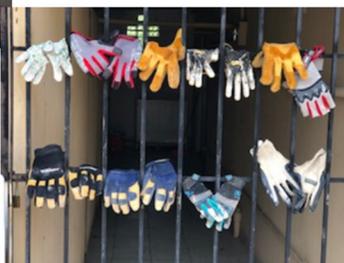
### American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains and All Hands and Hearts Smart Response Deadline to signup: 60 days before trip date

Serve your neighbors as they recover from the terrible disaster caused by Hurricane Maria and Hurricane Harvey. For more information, contact Stuart Lord at

[texashurricanerelief1718@gmail.com](mailto:texashurricanerelief1718@gmail.com)

#### Work may include:

- Homes with tin roofs have been blown away and tarps are being used. Roofs will be a major focus of our rebuilding efforts.
- General construction is needed in most areas. There are thousands of homes that were totally destroyed or extremely damaged. With our partners we are mainly seeking to assist in the following ways:
  - Clean up and construction prep
  - Wall and floor construction
  - Roofing
  - Painting



# What's Happening

## Calendar

### October

- World Mission Offering Month  
Clergy Appreciation Month  
11-12 MLC Meeting

### November

- 3 Daylight Savings Time Ends  
*(set clocks back one hour)*  
4-6 Pastors Retreat  
YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park  
11 Veterans Day *(Region office closed)*  
14 **Retired Clergy Luncheon**  
25 Mission Committee Meeting  
27-29 Thanksgiving Holiday Break  
*(Region office will close at noon on Wednesday)*



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*This newsletter is published  
on the 1st of each month.*

*The deadline for submissions  
is the 20th of each month.  
Send submissions to  
[akeys@abcrm.org](mailto:akeys@abcrm.org)*

*Reprint permission is granted  
to ABCRM churches.*



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